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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **St. Lucie County Now Accepts Text to 911 Service**

FORT PIERCE – St. Lucie County’s 911 call center, which handles all emergency calls for law enforcement and fire rescue services within the county, now accepts text messages to 911.

Cellphone users texting 911 should be prepared to answer two important questions when texting 911: (1) What is the address or location of the emergency? (2) What is the emergency or problem?

“While a voice call to 911 is always preferred, in certain circumstances a text to 911 may be safer or more practical specifically for persons with hearing or speech limitations,” said St. Lucie County Public Safety Director Ron Parrish.

Voice calls to 911 are usually the most efficient way to reach emergency help. For example, voice calls allow the 911 operator to more quickly ask questions and obtain information from the caller, while two-way communication by text can take more time and is subject to limits on the length of text messages. In addition, when you make a voice call to 911, the call taker will typically receive your phone number and the approximate location of your phone automatically.

While this is a significant enhancement to the current 911 system, users are cautioned that there may be some limitations to using this service such as a message delay; no guarantee of delivery and accuracy of the location. Text information may not be as reliable as it would be with a phone call to 911. Additionally, the coverage area of a wireless provider may impede messaging.

When making a text to 911 call, remember to be brief and concise, text in plain words and avoid using abbreviations. Photos and videos cannot be sent to 911. Residents are reminded to never text and drive.

St. Lucie County’s Public Safety Department 911 call center handles roughly 488,000 calls for service annually for the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office, St. Lucie County Fire-Rescue, Fort Pierce Police, Port St. Lucie Police and animal control – all under one roof.

If you have any questions, please contact St. Lucie County Public Safety Department Director Ron Parrish at 772-462-8110.

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