Canadian Audiologist

The Official Publication of the Canadian Academy of Audiology

What T-9-1-1 Means to Me

Published November 12th, 2014

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There is a new technology being rolled out in Canada. If you have a pre-registered cell phone and make a voice call to 9-1-1, they will know by your registration to respond back to you by texting to your phone. This capability will be available as each 9-1-1 call centre makes the necessary equipment and software upgrade. Think about what this means. Soon people who cannot talk or hear well on the phones, will be able to communicate directly with the 9-1-1 call centres themselves.

I want to share my experience with 911 that took place about 30 years ago. My wife and I are both hard of hearing where my wife cannot use the phone while I can talk on the phone a little bit, but it is still a struggle to do so. Our (then at the time) three-year-old daughter is hearing.

We live in a small comfortable house in a small suburban town. Our front door had a glass window which we covered with sheer drapes for semi privacy. One evening, while I was not at home attending night classes, a man came to our door and rang the doorbell. Since it was dark outside, my wife was afraid to answer the door. She ducked into the hallway hoping the man will think no one is at home and leaves. This man could see my wife going into the hallway through the sheers and proceed to ring the doorbell again then he started knocking on the door loudly.

Our daughter, even at the age of three, has already learned the basics of using the phone to talk to her grandparents and relaying the conversation to us, etc. She has also learned about 9-1-1 to call for help. Seeing her mommy standing in the hallway afraid, she went into our bedroom to use the phone to call 9-1-1. She told the call centre that a man was scaring her mommy but, being three-years old, did not know what our home address was. The call centre was able to get our address from the phone system and dispatched the police to come to our house.

The man has since left by the time the police have arrived; they located him down the street. It had turned out he was selling magazine subscriptions and was under pressure to make his quota before stopping for the day.

So, all is well and no harm done, the policeman told our little girl that she did good to call 9-1-1.

As parents, we were proud of our little girl, but as hard of hearing parents, we felt guilty of having to subject our little girl to perform a task that should have been carried out by us.

Having T9-1-1 will be a huge relief for people who cannot hear or talk on cell phones. We will be able to call for help ourselves not having to worry about being alone, having to find someone to call for us, or asking our little children to make the call. Now, 30 years later, T9-1-1 is coming not a moment too soon.