

KARI'S LAW

What is Kari's Law?

In December 2013, Kari Hunt was killed by her estranged husband in a motel room in Texas. Her 9-year-old daughter attempted to dial 911, but the motel phone required "9" to be dialed to reach any outside line, including emergency services. This event launched Kari's Law, which requires all organizations or businesses that use a multi-line telephone system (MLTS) to provide direct access to 911.

In 2020, the Howard County Council passed Bill 59, an act requiring that all MLTS allow for the direct dialing of 911. Many telephone systems for hotels, hospitals, motels, schools, and businesses require that users dial an additional number to obtain an outside line. Anyone who is unfamiliar with such a telephone system will be unable to reach emergency services during a crisis.

Howard County will take steps to ensure that any MLTS system that is accessible to the general public must allow for direct dialing of 911.

What to Do

- Contact your MLTS provider and inquire how their services are set-up to reach 911. Ask for a direct dialing of 911 without having to dial an extension such as "9."
- If the inspector from the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) Office of the Fire Marshal randomly selects one of the phones on your system to dial 911, and the call goes through, you need to do nothing. Should the call not go through, you will be instructed to contact your MLTS provider to correct the issue and come into compliance with Kari's Law.

FAQs

Question: If a violation is found, how long do I have to fix it?
Answer: Three months.

Question: When will I be fined if I'm not compliant with Kari's Law?
Answer: No fines for the first year of implementation. Howard County will focus on educating businesses and organizations about Kari's Law.

Question: Will these inspections occur during the normal scheduled rotation that HCDFRS already uses for inspections?
Answer: Howard County will utilize the normal Fire and Rescue Services inspection schedule. However, if there is a location in which a 911 call does not work per Kari's Law, an inspection will occur shortly thereafter.

Contact

For questions and additional information:
Howard County Police Department: 410-313-2316
HCDFRS Office of the Fire Marshal: 410-313-6040

