



## Lea County

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### **PUBLIC RELEASE**

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### **EMERGENCY DISPATCH SAVES VALUABLE TIME WITH AUTO-ATTENDANT**

Lea County Communication Authority went live with their telephone line auto-attendant on June 15, 2021, with the goal of decreasing the number of non-emergency calls taken by dispatchers.

The auto-attendant, which is a recorded menu of options that the caller can choose from, directs citizens to their intended destinations without the aid of a live dispatcher, drastically reducing wait time for callers when they place emergency calls. An emergency is defined as a situation that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property or environment. Most emergencies require urgent intervention to prevent a worsening of the situation. It is an unexpected and usually dangerous situation that calls for immediate action.

Upon connecting with the auto-attendant, the recording instructs the caller to hang up and dial 911 if the call is an emergency. When calling 911, the caller will immediately be connected to a live dispatcher. If the call isn't an emergency and the caller stays on the line, the recording provides a list of options the caller can choose from. If the caller doesn't hear their option, they are directed to wait for the dispatch prompt.

The menu list is ordered by the most frequently requested departments and agencies. Currently, Lovington departments are listed first for the benefit of its citizens because Lovington is new to the system and the LCCA consolidation.

There is also an option to choose to hear the menu in English or Spanish.

The menu options do and will change periodically, so there is no set workaround.

"It takes a lot of time when someone calls and wants to be transferred to the jail," said LCCA director Angela Martinez. "The dispatchers have to ask many questions and do research if the citizen doesn't know if they need to be transferred to the City Jail or the Lea County Detention Facility. The same goes for transferring to courts or records, evidence, etc., which takes up a lot of time."

Prior to using the auto-attendant, dispatchers transferred 22,320 calls in 10 months. After implementing the auto-attendant, dispatchers transferred 7,203 calls in 10 months, a decrease of 15,117 calls.

"Recently, we have seen an increase in 911 calls since implementing the auto-attendant because citizens are choosing not to listen to the menu," said Martinez. "We are asking citizens not to call 911 if it's not an emergency, as they are tying up one of the fourteen 911 lines and potentially preventing someone with a real life-threatening emergency from getting through. There are statutes for misuse of 911 because of this."

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