



How To Use Your Mobile In An Emergency

Description

How to use your mobile in an emergency

Emergencies strike without warning, whether you're stranded in remote areas, facing medical crises, or encountering natural disasters. Being able to contact emergency services at any time is crucial. Knowing how to use your mobile to the best of its capabilities in an emergency before it happens can save you valuable time and energy.

In areas of service

With your RSP

If you have service with your usual RSP, ie. Telstra, you can go ahead and make an emergency call as normal by dialling Triple Zero (000). If you have a booster, this may enhance your RSP signal.

With other networks

Have you ever looked at your phone and seen 'SOS' or 'emergency calls only' where your bars of service usually are in the top right-hand corner of your phone?

This means while your phone doesn't currently have service through your RSP's network, but it will give you access through other networks to make emergency calls. For example, if you're a Telstra customer but out of range and can pick up Optus coverage, your phone will show the SOS signal and use the other carrier's network to make an emergency call.

Unfortunately, a booster doesn't work in this scenario, as it is only programmed to pick up your RSP's signal.

It's important to remember this is only for emergency voice calls to Triple Zero (000), not regular calls, texts, or using data.

Previously, you could also dial **112**, which is the international GSM emergency number. While many phones still support this number, officially it's being phased out and it is safest to call 000.

The symbol can show up on your phone in different ways depending on your phone make, model and operating system:



- all iPhones running iOS 16 or later show 'SOS' or 'SOS only' in the status bar.
- older versions of iOS may just show 'no service' without the 'SOS' indicator.
- Android phones may show any of the following descriptors:
 - emergency calls only
 - no service – emergency calls only
 - a small SOS icon (on newer models)

To make an emergency call in this mode, you just need to dial 000 from your phone as normal. Remember, you can't use apps like WhatsApp or Messenger to dial 000.

Areas with no service

Apple Emergency SOS via satellite

In Australia, Apple iPhone 14 and above receive emergency SOS coverage via the Globalstar satellite network when no mobile tower network coverage is available. It only works on these phone models. iPhone 14, 15 and 16.

The Telstra Satellite to Mobile (STM) service does not provide this feature, you are not able to message triple zero (000) emergency services. More about STM below.

When you use the Apple Emergency SOS via satellite feature on your iPhone, your alert is routed to a local emergency service dispatch centre through a relay centre operated by trained emergency specialists.

How it works in practice:

1. You try to call 000 but have no mobile or Wi-Fi coverage.
2. The iPhone prompts you to connect to a satellite and guides you to stay aligned with it.
3. You answer a few quick questions about your emergency.
4. Your responses and location data are sent via satellite to Apple's relay centre.
5. The centre contacts the appropriate emergency service based on your location and situation.

Satellite to Mobile (STM) technology



Satellite to Mobile is designed to give you the ability to send SMS messages in areas where there is no mobile signal, such as remote or rural locations.

Currently in Australia only Telstra through Starlink offer this additional coverage. **It is important to note, this feature does not send text messages to emergency services.**

A comparison of mobile phone emergency features

Feature	Normal Mobile Calls	SOS Only (Mobile Network)	Satellite SOS	STM (Satellite to Mobile)
Requires mobile signal?	Yes (your carrier's network)	Yes (any network)	No	No
Works in remote areas with no signal?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Contact method	Standard voice call	Call 000	Text-based SOS via guided steps	Currently text to non-emergency services only.
Availability	Universal (with coverage)	Standard on most phones	iPhone 14+, select Androids	Currently iPhone 13, 14, 15 and 16 (all models) and Samsung Galaxy S25 series devices.
Cost	As per your mobile plan	Included in normal plan	No charge	Included in normal plan
Requires setup or app?	No	No	Yes (via settings/emergency menu)	Requires updated software. Could be in both software and network settings
Direct connection to emergency services?	No unless dialling 000	Yes	Yes (via relay centre)	No
Speed of communication	Immediate (voice call)	Immediate	Up to 10 mins	Up to 10 mins



Other ways to set up your mobile for emergency situations

There are other ways to set up your mobile phone for easy access to contacts, information and services in an emergency. Set these up now, before you need to use them.

- **Emergency numbers:** Always know your local emergency numbers. In Australia, dial 000 for police, fire, or ambulance.
- **Use emergency SOS features:** Both Android and iOS phones offer SOS shortcuts. These can send your location and a distress signal to pre-set emergency contacts. Check your settings and set this up before an emergency occurs. Note this is separate to STM and Satellite SOS.
- **Download emergency apps:** Install apps like Emergency+ which help guide callers through what to say and even share your GPS location.
- **Enable location sharing:** Use Google Maps or Apple's "Find My" to allow trusted friends or family to track your real-time location.
- **Preserve battery:** In low-battery situations, activate battery saver mode, reduce screen brightness, and close unused apps. Carry a power bank if you're going off-grid.
- **Offline access:** Save key information locally, such as contact numbers, medical details, or maps so you can access them without internet coverage.

For more information on being prepared for emergencies, visit our [Staying connected in emergencies](#) page.

Category

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