



## How to call 9-1-1 from your iPad

by Bryan Smith, LTCL Tech Coach

Today's topic comes from another library patron who sent an email to [techcoach@laketravislibrary.org](mailto:techcoach@laketravislibrary.org). Her specific scenario is that she and her husband share an iPhone and they do not have traditional home phone service. She uses FaceTime on their iPad connected to Wi-Fi and they can call each other when apart using Facetime and calling their common Apple ID. Her question was, when one of them is away from home with the iPhone, will the other person at home be able to call 911 with the iPad. GREAT QUESTION!

I really enjoyed this question because I have now spent several hours reading and testing different scenarios that I didn't know exist! I **used** to know the answer to this question, and I even gave her an incorrect answer when she first emailed. You see, the capability to do what she wants was not always available, and I shared an answer that is not true. I since sent her a corrected response. ☺

Before we get into how to do this, let's review two different capabilities that enable her to do exactly what she wants: "Wi-Fi Calling", and "Wi-Fi Calling on iCloud-connected devices." Also, this column is assuming that you do not have a cellular-enabled iPad with cellular network connectivity.

### Wi-Fi Calling

Wi-Fi Calling is a feature that's been around on iPhones since around 2014. It provided cell phones the ability to use a connected Wi-Fi network when the cellular signal is weak or non-existent. I've enjoyed this feature quite a bit when inside buildings where the cellular signal is weak. I use it in my current home and have very clear calls. The most popular [wireless carriers provide support for Wi-Fi Calling](#) (AT&T, Consumer Cellular, Cricket, Spectrum, Sprint... now a part of T-Mobile, T-Mobile USA, Verizon). Basically, it allows your cell phone to connect to your carrier's network via Wi-Fi versus a cell tower. If you think of it this way, you won't get into trouble like I did several years ago.

### Wi-Fi Calling does not bypass your wireless carrier

One day, I wanted to call a friend of mine who lives in India (I was in Austin, TX). I thought that if I saw that I was definitely using Wi-Fi Calling, then I could call him and there would be no international calling charges. After all, I was just using the Internet to call him. WRONG! My gut knotted up when I saw the \$80 charge. That's when I realized what I said above... Wi-Fi Calling simply allows you to connect to your wireless carrier's network via Wi-Fi versus a cell tower. My wireless plan did not have any international calling features, so I paid full retail price! So, if you have free wireless calling within the U.S., then you will also have free Wi-Fi Calling within the U.S. That doesn't mean that you have free Wi-Fi Calling from the

U.S. to Germany, and it doesn't mean that you have free Wi-Fi Calling while in Poland to the U.S. It simply follows your wireless plan that you have for your cell phone.

### **Wi-Fi Calling on iCloud-connected devices (like an iPad)**

Apple released Wi-Fi Calling [on iCloud-connected devices](#) in the Fall of 2015 with iOS 9. This was the capability that I was unaware of when I received the inquiry from a library patron. With this capability, if your [wireless carrier supports it](#), you can make calls with your iPad (using FaceTime) to any phone number when you are connected to Wi-Fi. The same rules for rates/charges as I described above. Your iPhone can be turned off and you can still make calls with your iPad. I tested this on my iPad, and you could do the same, by doing the following:

1. Enabled Wi-Fi Calling on my iPad. Read [Make a call with Wi-Fi Calling](#)
2. Turned off my iPhone
3. Called a friend – told him what I was doing.
4. Called 911 – I told them I was testing this feature and asked them if they could see the Emergency Address that I set up for my iPad.
5. Called 311. It didn't work. I then looked up Wi-Fi Calling from my wireless carrier (AT&T) and saw these caveats:
  - a. Wi-Fi Calling doesn't support calls to 211, 311, 511, and 811.
  - b. You can't use Wi-Fi Calling in China, Cuba, North Korea, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, or Vietnam.

So, not only can you call 9-1-1 from an iPad when connected to Wi-Fi, you can also call any phone number in the world... knowing that you are still subject to the terms of your wireless carrier's plan that you are using. You can even make a call from your iPhone and from your iPad simultaneously – it's like having a second phone line!

### **Is Wi-Fi Calling safe?**

Wi-Fi calling is very safe as long as you are connecting to a trusted and secured Wi-Fi network. This means a Wi-Fi network that is password protected. However, non-password protected public Wi-Fi is less secure, and someone could tap into the phone call (rare). You should only connect to public Wi-Fi networks when you know the exact network name and trust the supplier. This is true for iPhones and iPads.

I'm sorry that I don't have an Android phone or tablet in order to learn/test. Maybe someone can email me to share their experience and we can have a second column for Android users.

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