BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Emergency SOS Medical ID & Satellite Texting

Calling for help, sharing what responders need, and texting by satellite — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every phone owner and family

Set it up on a calm day — and never test by calling 911

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For iPhone (iOS 26 & 27), Pixel & Samsung (Android 16, One UI 8) · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the safety features already inside your phone. Start with the half-hour plan in Part 1, then turn to the part for your iPhone or Android phone. Read in any order and at your own pace. If a screen looks a little different on your phone, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Ready

What your phone's safety features can do, what they can't, and a calm half-hour plan to set them up before you ever need them.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. This guide is about the part of your phone most people never look at: the safety features. Tucked inside nearly every modern iPhone and Android phone are tools that can call for help with a few button presses, show your allergies and medications to a paramedic, tell your family where you are, and on newer phones even send a text for help when there is no cell signal at all.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped people make sense of their technology, and I serve folks right here in Portage County, Ohio. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time. Any word you might not know, I'll stop and explain.

Who this guide is for

- Anyone with an iPhone or an Android phone (Google Pixel, Samsung Galaxy and others) who has never set up the emergency features.
- Grown children and caregivers who want to help a parent set these up, with that parent's blessing.
- Anyone who drives back roads, hikes, fishes, hunts, or travels where cell service is spotty.
- Anyone who is simply curious what happens if they press the wrong buttons, and how to stop it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end you'll know how to call for help fast, fill in a Medical ID that responders can actually see, choose the right emergency contacts, understand satellite texting and what it costs, practice safely without bothering 911, and set all of it up for someone you love. Most of all, you'll have peace of mind.

An honest promise about this topic

In most of my guides I tell you that you can't break anything by exploring. That's mostly true here, too. But emergency settings are the one place where a setting really matters, so I'll be precise and a little cautious. **Your phone is a helper, not a replacement for calling 911 yourself or for a medical alert system.** If you are ever in an emergency and can dial, dial 911 and talk to a person. Everything in this guide is a backup to that, not a substitute for it.

STAY SAFE

Please never place a test call to 911

You do not need to call 911 to see whether these features work. In Chapter 28, *Practicing Safely Without Calling 911* I'll show you the safe demo modes Apple and Google built for exactly this purpose. Test calls tie up dispatchers who may be handling a real emergency.

You're never stuck alone

If anything in this guide feels like too much, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. We'll sort it out together, with no judgment. There's no such thing as a silly question when it comes to safety.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Your Phone Can and Can't Do in an Emergency

Before we press any buttons, let's set fair expectations. These features are genuinely helpful, but each one has limits. Knowing the limits is what keeps you safe.

What these features can do for you

Feature	What it does for you
Emergency SOS	Calls 911 with a few quick button presses, even from a locked phone, and then texts your emergency contacts. See Chapter 5, *Calling for Help with the iPhone Buttons* for iPhone and Chapter 17, *Emergency SOS on Android and Pixel* for Android.
Medical ID / Medical info	Shows your allergies, medications, conditions and emergency contacts to a responder from your locked screen. See Chapter 8, *Setting Up Your Medical ID* and Chapter 19, *Emergency and Medical Info on Android*.
Crash detection	On newer phones, notices a severe car crash and calls for help if you don't respond. See Chapter 10, *Crash Detection on iPhone* and Chapter 21, *Car Crash Detection on Pixel*.
Satellite texting	On newer phones, lets you text emergency services when there is no cell signal or Wi-Fi, as long as you are outside under open sky. See Chapter 11, *Emergency SOS via Satellite* and Chapter 23, *Satellite SOS on Google Pixel*.
Check In / Safety Check	Lets a family member know you got home, and alerts them if you didn't. See Chapter 15, *Check In: Let Family Know You Got Home* and Chapter 20, *Emergency Sharing and Safety Check*.

What they can't do

- They can't help if the phone is in another room, out of battery, or switched off.
- Crash and fall detection can miss some accidents, and can sometimes go off when nothing is wrong.
- Satellite texting needs a clear view of the sky. It won't work indoors, in a basement, or under heavy trees.
- No phone feature watches over you around the clock the way a monitored medical alert service does. We compare the two honestly in Chapter 31, *Phone Features vs. a Medical Alert System*.

HEADS UP

Battery is the hidden weak spot

Every feature in this guide stops working when the battery dies. If you're heading out alone, or you live alone, make charging the phone every night part of your routine, the same as locking the door.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your screens may look a little different

Apple, Google and Samsung update their software several times a year, and carriers can change menus too. If a button name doesn't match exactly, look for the closest match. The idea is always the same. Facts in this guide are current as of November 2026.

CHAPTER 3

Which Phone and Which Software Do You Have?

Some features in this guide only work on newer phones, so it helps to know exactly what you're holding. This takes one minute.

On an iPhone

1. Open the **Settings** app (the gray gear).
2. Tap **General**, then **About**.
3. Look at **Model Name** (for example, iPhone 15) and **iOS Version** (for example, 26 or 27).

On an Android phone

1. Open the **Settings** app.
2. Scroll to the bottom and tap **About phone**.
3. Note the phone's name and model, then look for **Android version** (on some phones it's under **Software information**).

Who gets what

Feature	iPhone	Android
Emergency SOS by buttons	All current iPhones	Android 12 and later; Samsung Galaxy phones
Medical ID / Medical info	All current iPhones (Health app)	Pixel and many Android phones; Samsung
Crash detection	iPhone 14 and later	Pixel 4a and later (Car Crash Detection)
Satellite SOS	iPhone 14 and later	Pixel 9 and later (not Pixel 9a); some Galaxy phones by carrier
Check In / Safety Check	iOS 17 and later, both people	Personal Safety app (Pixel and others)

TIP

Keep your phone up to date

Many safety features arrive or improve through free software updates. On iPhone: **Settings > General > Software Update**. On Android, open **Settings**, tap the search bar at the top and type **software update**. Update over Wi-Fi with the phone plugged in.

CHAPTER 4

Your Half-Hour Safety Setup Plan

You don't need to read this whole guide before you start. If you only have half an hour, do these five things, in this order. Each one points to the chapter with the slow, step-by-step directions.

1. **Add your emergency contacts**, the two or three people who should be told if you call for help. iPhone: Chapter 7, *Emergency Contacts and What They're Told*. Android: Chapter 19, *Emergency and Medical Info on Android*.
2. **Fill in your Medical ID or Medical info** and make sure it shows on the locked screen. iPhone: Chapter 8, *Setting Up Your Medical ID*. Android: Chapter 19, *Emergency and Medical Info on Android*.
3. **Learn your SOS buttons**, and choose whether you want a countdown or a confirmation step. iPhone: Chapter 5, *Calling for Help with the iPhone Buttons*. Android: Chapter 17, *Emergency SOS on Android and Pixel* or Chapter 18, *Emergency SOS on Samsung Galaxy*.
4. **Check that crash detection is on** if your phone has it. iPhone: Chapter 10, *Crash Detection on iPhone*. Pixel: Chapter 21, *Car Crash Detection on Pixel*.
5. **Try the satellite demo** if your phone supports it, outside, so you know what it looks like. See Chapter 28, *Practicing Safely Without Calling 911*.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why do it now, on a calm day

In a real emergency, hands shake and minds race. Ten calm minutes of practice today means your fingers already know what to do. It's the same reason we practice fire drills.

What to have handy before you start

- A list of your current medications and doses, and any allergies.
- Your major medical conditions, and your doctor's name and phone number if you'd like to include them.
- The phone numbers of the people you want as emergency contacts (ask them first).
- Your phone, charged, and about thirty quiet minutes.

TIP

Ask your contacts first

Let the people you list know they're your emergency contacts, and that they may get an automatic text with your location if you ever call for help. That way a text at 2 a.m. won't confuse them, and they'll know what to do.

PART 2

Your iPhone

Emergency SOS, your emergency contacts, Medical ID, Crash Detection, satellite texting, Check In, and a quick word on Apple Watch. Written for iOS 26 and iOS 27.

CHAPTER 5

Calling for Help with the iPhone Buttons

Emergency SOS is Apple's name for the quick way to call 911 without unlocking your phone or dialing. It's built into every current iPhone. There are two ways to start it, and it's worth learning both.

Way 1: Hold two buttons (the one to remember)

1. Press and hold the **side button** (on the right edge) and either **volume button** (on the left edge) at the same time.
2. After a moment, sliders appear on the screen, including **Emergency Call** (on some versions it reads **SOS**).
3. To call, drag the **Emergency Call** slider to the right. Your iPhone dials emergency services.
4. If you keep holding the buttons instead, the iPhone starts a countdown and sounds an alarm. When the countdown ends and you let go, it calls automatically. (This is called **Call with Hold and Release**.)

Way 2: Press the side button five times quickly

If **Call with 5 Button Presses** is turned on, rapidly pressing the side button five times starts the same countdown and alarm, and then calls emergency services automatically. This is handy if you can't manage two buttons at once.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **The countdown is your chance to cancel**
>
> The alarm and countdown are there so you can stop an accidental call. If you started it by mistake, tap **Stop** on the screen before the countdown finishes. If a call does go through by mistake, stay on the line and tell the dispatcher it was an accident. See Chapter 29, *Called 911 by Mistake? Handling and Preventing Accidental Calls*.

Other ways to reach 911 from a locked iPhone

- On the passcode screen, tap **Emergency** in the corner and dial 911. You don't need your passcode.
- Or simply unlock the phone and dial 911 in the Phone app like any other call. That's always fine.

STAY SAFE

Dialing 911 yourself is still the best way

These shortcuts are for when you can't easily dial. If you can dial 911 and speak, do that. A person on the line can ask questions and guide you, and that's the fastest help there is.

CHAPTER 6

Choosing Your iPhone SOS Settings

Apple lets you decide how Emergency SOS behaves. The right choice depends on you: some people want the fastest possible call, others worry more about calling by accident. Here's how to look, and what each switch means.

1. Open **Settings**.
2. Scroll down and tap **Emergency SOS**.
3. Look at the switches near the top, described in the table below. Green means on.

Setting	What it does
Call with Hold and Release	Holding the side and a volume button starts a countdown and alarm; letting go afterward calls 911 automatically.
Call with 5 Button Presses	Pressing the side button five times quickly starts the countdown and then calls 911 automatically.
Call Quietly	Silences the warning alarm and flashes during the countdown (iOS 16.3 and later). Useful if making noise could put you in danger.
Call After Severe Crash	On iPhone 14 and later, lets Crash Detection call for you. See Chapter 10, *Crash Detection on iPhone*.

TIP

What I usually suggest

For most people, leave **Call with Hold and Release** on and keep **Call Quietly** off, so the alarm warns you before a call goes out. If you keep calling 911 by accident (it happens with phones carried in a tight pocket or purse), consider turning off **Call with 5 Button Presses**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Turning these off doesn't remove SOS

Even with both automatic options off, you can still hold the side and volume buttons and drag the **Emergency Call** slider yourself. You're only removing the automatic part.

The countdown sound

Older iPhones had a switch called Countdown Sound. On current versions of iOS the alarm plays unless you turn on **Call Quietly**. If you're hard of hearing, the strong vibration and flashing screen still let you know the countdown has started.

CHAPTER 7

Emergency Contacts and What They're Told

Your **emergency contacts** are the people your iPhone notifies after you call for help with Emergency SOS. On iPhone, they live inside your Medical ID in the Health app, so setting them up and setting up your Medical ID go hand in hand.

Add an emergency contact

1. Make sure the person is already saved in your **Contacts** with their cell phone number.
2. Open **Settings**, tap **Emergency SOS**, then tap the link to set up or edit emergency contacts in **Health**. You can also open the **Health** app and go to your Medical ID, as shown in Chapter 8, *Setting Up Your Medical ID*.
3. Tap **Edit** if needed, then scroll to **Emergency Contacts** and tap the green **add** button.
4. Choose the person, then choose how they're related to you (for example, daughter or spouse).
5. Tap **Done** to save.

What happens after you call 911 with Emergency SOS

- When the emergency call ends, your iPhone sends your emergency contacts a text message saying you made an emergency call, with your current location, unless you choose to cancel.
- For a period of time afterward, they get updates when your location changes.
- Your iPhone reminds you every four hours for 24 hours that it's still sharing your location.
- To stop sharing sooner, tap the status bar at the top of the screen and choose **Stop Sharing Emergency Location**.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **You can't list 911 as a contact**
>
> Emergency contacts are for family and friends. Apple doesn't let you add emergency services as an emergency contact; Emergency SOS calls them for you.

TIP

Choose people who answer their phones

Pick two or three people who keep their phones nearby and would know what to do: call you back, call a neighbor, or head over. A cell phone number is best, since the alert arrives as a text.

CHAPTER 8

Setting Up Your Medical ID

Your **Medical ID** is a short medical card that lives in your iPhone. A paramedic, nurse or helpful stranger can open it from your locked screen, without your passcode, to see your allergies, medications, conditions, blood type and who to call. If you're ever unable to speak for yourself, it speaks for you.

Create or update your Medical ID

1. Open the **Health** app (the white icon with a red heart).
2. Tap your **profile picture** or initials in the top-right corner.
3. Tap **Medical ID**.
4. Tap **Get Started** if you've never made one, or **Edit** if you have.
5. Fill in what you're comfortable sharing: date of birth, medical conditions, medications, allergies and reactions, blood type, organ donor status, and emergency contacts.
6. Under **Emergency Access**, turn on **Show When Locked** so it can be seen from the Lock Screen.
7. Also turn on **Share During Emergency Call** so your Medical ID can be sent to emergency services when you call or text 911, where that's supported.
8. Tap **Done**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth ten minutes

Responders often arrive knowing nothing about you. A blood thinner, a pacemaker, a severe allergy or a diabetes diagnosis can change what they do. Your Medical ID puts that information in their hands in seconds.

GOOD TO KNOW

The Health app is getting a new look

Apple has been redesigning the Health app in recent iOS 27 updates, so a button may sit in a slightly different spot. Look for your picture or initials, then **Medical ID**.

What to write, and what to leave out

- **Do include:** allergies (especially to medications), blood thinners, insulin, heart devices, seizure conditions, and anything a responder must know right away.
- **Keep it short:** "Metoprolol 25 mg twice daily" is better than a paragraph.
- **Leave out:** your Social Security number, Medicare number, account numbers or passwords. Anyone who picks up your phone can read a Medical ID that shows when locked.

TIP

Set a reminder to review it

Medications change. Put a reminder in your calendar to look over your Medical ID every few months, or whenever your doctor changes a prescription.

CHAPTER 9

How Responders See Your Medical ID

It helps to know what a responder will actually do, so you can check that it works on your own phone. This is completely safe to try: looking at your Medical ID doesn't call anyone.

Check it yourself from the Lock Screen

1. Lock your iPhone (press the side button once).
2. Wake the screen and swipe up as if to unlock, so the passcode screen appears.
3. Tap **Emergency** in the corner.
4. Tap **Medical ID**. Your information should appear.
5. To leave without calling anyone, tap **Done** or **Cancel**.

You can also see it from the button sliders: hold the side button and a volume button, and a **Medical ID** slider appears alongside Emergency Call. Drag that one, not the Emergency Call slider. To get out, press the side button or tap **Cancel**.

HEADS UP

Careful with the sliders

If **Call with Hold and Release** is on, keep holding the buttons too long and a countdown starts. Press and hold just until the sliders appear, then let go. If an alarm starts, tap **Stop**.

GOOD TO KNOW

If nothing shows up

If tapping Emergency doesn't show a Medical ID, either one hasn't been made yet or **Show When Locked** is off. Go back to Chapter 8, *Setting Up Your Medical ID* and turn it on.

Responders know to look

Many emergency medical crews are trained to check a phone for medical information, and Apple places Medical ID right on the emergency screen to make that easy. Still, it's wise to carry a paper card in your wallet too, in case your phone is lost, damaged or dead.

CHAPTER 10

Crash Detection on iPhone

Crash Detection uses sensors in the iPhone to recognize a severe car crash, such as a front, side or rear collision or a rollover. If it detects one and you don't respond, it calls emergency services for you and lets your emergency contacts know.

Which iPhones have it

Crash Detection is available on iPhone 14 and later (all models), with iOS 16 or later. Newer Apple Watch models have it too. It's turned on by default, so most people only need to confirm it.

Check that it's on

1. Open **Settings** and tap **Emergency SOS**.
2. Find **Call After Severe Crash** and make sure the switch is green.

What happens after a crash

- Your iPhone sounds an alarm and shows an alert asking if you're OK.
- If you're fine, you can cancel. If you need help, you can call right away.
- If you don't respond, after a short countdown the iPhone calls emergency services and plays an automated message saying you've been in a severe crash, with your approximate location.
- Your emergency contacts are notified, as described in Chapter 7, *Emergency Contacts and What They're Told*.

HEADS UP

It won't catch every crash

Apple says Crash Detection can't detect all crashes, and very rarely it may go off when there wasn't one, for example on a roller coaster. If it does call by mistake, stay on the line and explain. See Chapter 29, *Called 911 by Mistake? Handling and Preventing Accidental Calls*.

TIP

Leave it on

There's no cost and nothing to maintain. The one time it matters, you may not be able to reach your phone.

CHAPTER 11

Emergency SOS via Satellite

On an **iPhone 14 or later**, you can text emergency services even when you have no cell signal and no Wi-Fi, by connecting to a satellite. It's meant for places like back roads, state forests, lakes and mountains. It is not for use indoors, and it's slower than a normal text.

When you'd use it

Always try to call 911 first. If the call can't connect because there's no coverage, your iPhone offers **Emergency Text via Satellite**. Apple recommends trying the regular emergency number first, every time.

How it works, step by step

1. Go outside where you can see open sky, away from tall trees and buildings.
2. Dial **911**. If the call won't go through, tap **Emergency Text via Satellite** (you may also see a prompt on screen).
3. Answer the short questionnaire by tapping the choices that fit (for example, what kind of emergency and who needs help). This helps responders send the right help.
4. Choose whether to notify your emergency contacts.
5. Follow the arrows on screen to point your iPhone toward the satellite, turning slowly as it tells you.
6. Once connected, your answers, your location (including elevation) and your battery level are sent. Keep following the prompts and stay where you are if you can.

GOOD TO KNOW

Where it works

Emergency SOS via satellite works in the United States and a list of other countries. In the U.S. it needs iOS 16.1 or later. It won't work where the sky is blocked by a roof, trees, hills or tall buildings.

STAY SAFE

Plan ahead if you go off the grid

Satellite texting is a wonderful backup, but it's not a reason to skip the basics: tell someone your route and when you'll be back, carry a charged phone and a backup battery, and bring a paper map.

CHAPTER 12

Messages and More via Satellite

Beyond emergencies, newer iPhones can use the satellite for everyday texting when you're out of range. That means you can tell family "I'm fine, running late, the road's washed out" from a place with no bars at all.

Messages via satellite

- Works on **iPhone 14 and later** with **iOS 18 or later** in the U.S.
- Turn on iMessage and make sure your SIM is active *before* you leave coverage.
- iMessage friends need iOS 18 or later to get your satellite iMessages. Regular text (SMS) to other phones depends on your carrier supporting it.
- When you lose signal, your iPhone offers to connect to a satellite in Messages. Follow the arrows on screen, the same way as SOS.

Find My via satellite

Apple also lists **Find My via satellite** among its satellite features, which lets you send your location to people you already share your location with, when you're off the grid. Open the **Find My** app and look for the satellite option when you have no service.

Carrier satellite texting on iPhone 13 and later

Separately from Apple's own service, some U.S. carriers offer satellite texting that also works on iPhone 13 and later, such as T-Mobile's T-Satellite. Apple says these need the latest iOS and a supported carrier, and some carriers require a particular plan. We cover carrier options in Chapter 24, *Samsung and Carrier Satellite Texting*.

TIP

Try it before you need it

The demo in Chapter 28, *Practicing Safely Without Calling 911* lets you practice connecting to a satellite without sending a real message to emergency services.

CHAPTER 13

Roadside Assistance via Satellite

A flat tire or dead battery on a country road with no signal isn't a 911 emergency, but it's still a problem. On an **iPhone 14 or later**, **Roadside Assistance via satellite** lets you text a roadside service for help.

Who provides it in the U.S.

Provider	What you need
AAA	Needs iPhone 14 or later with iOS 17 or later. Covers cars, pickup trucks and motorcycles.
Verizon Roadside Assistance	Needs iPhone 14 or later with iOS 17.2 or later, and a Verizon SIM.

How to use it

1. Go outside with a clear view of the sky.
2. Try to call or text your roadside provider as usual. With no cell service or Wi-Fi, your iPhone offers **Roadside Assistance via satellite**; tap it.
3. Answer the questions about your problem (flat tire, out of fuel, locked out, and so on).
4. Choose your provider, then follow the arrows to connect to the satellite.

HEADS UP

The satellite connection is included; the tow may not be

Using the satellite to reach the provider is included in Apple's free period, but the roadside service itself works according to your membership or subscription. If you aren't a member, the provider may still help for a fee. Ask about cost before agreeing to service.

STAY SAFE

If anyone is hurt, it's an emergency

If there's an injury, smoke, fire, or you're stuck in an unsafe spot, use Emergency SOS instead, as in Chapter 11, *Emergency SOS via Satellite*.

CHAPTER 14

Which iPhones Get Satellite, and Is It Still Free?

This is a very common question, and the answer has changed a few times, so here it is as of November 2026.

Your iPhone	Satellite features	Cost right now
iPhone 13 and earlier	No Apple satellite features	Carrier options only, see Chapter 24, *Samsung and Carrier Satellite Texting*
iPhone 14, 15 or 16	Yes: Emergency SOS, Messages, Find My and Roadside via satellite	Free; Apple extended free access for another year in September 2026
iPhone 17, iPhone Air and newer	Yes, same features	Free for two years after you activate the phone

The fine print, in plain English

- Apple's satellite features come free for two years after you activate an iPhone 14 or later.
- For iPhone 14, 15 and 16 owners, Apple has repeatedly extended that free period. In September 2026 it added another year for phones activated before September 9, 2026.
- Apple has not announced what, if anything, it will charge after the free period ends.
- The extension happens automatically. There is nothing to sign up for, and nothing to pay.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody needs your card number to keep SOS working

Because there's nothing to sign up for, a call, text or email saying you must pay, "renew" or verify your card to keep Emergency SOS or satellite working should be treated as a scam. Hang up and check **Settings** on your own phone, or call me. See Chapter 33, *Scams That Use "Emergency" and "Medical Alert"*.

CHAPTER 15

Check In: Let Family Know You Got Home

Check In is a feature in the Messages app that automatically tells a friend or family member when you've arrived home, or when a timer ends and you're OK. If you *don't* arrive, or don't respond, it lets them know and shares some helpful details. It's like saying "call me when you get there," except nobody has to remember to call.

What you need

- iOS 17 or later on your iPhone, and on the iPhone of the person you're checking in with.
- Their contact in a Messages conversation with you.

Start a Check In

1. Open **Messages** and open your conversation with the person.
2. Tap the **plus button** (+) next to the text box, then tap **Check In** (you may need to tap **More** first).
3. Tap **Edit** to choose **When I arrive** (pick a destination) or **After a timer** (pick how long).
4. Tap **Done**, then tap the send button.
5. When you arrive, your iPhone tells them automatically and the Check In ends.

What they're told if something seems wrong

Data level	What's shared
Limited	Your current location, plus battery level and cell signal for your iPhone and Apple Watch.
Full	Everything in Limited, plus the route you traveled and where your iPhone was last unlocked and where your Apple Watch was last removed.

You choose the level the first time you use Check In. To change it later, go to **Settings > Apps > Messages > Check In Data**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Peace of mind for both of you

A daughter doesn't have to wonder whether Dad made it home from the late church supper, and Dad doesn't have to remember to text. If he's delayed, he can add time with a tap.

CHAPTER 16

A Quick Word on Apple Watch Fall Detection

If you wear an Apple Watch, it can add a layer the iPhone can't: **Fall Detection**. When the watch senses a hard fall, it taps your wrist, sounds an alarm and asks if you're OK. If you don't respond, it can call emergency services and notify your emergency contacts.

Is it on?

If you entered your age when you set up the watch (or in the Health app) and you're **55 or older**, Fall Detection turns on automatically. Between ages 18 and 55 you can turn it on yourself and choose **Always on** or **Only on during workouts**. Make sure your correct age is in your Medical ID and Health profile.

1. On your iPhone, open the **Watch** app.
2. Tap **My Watch**, then **Emergency SOS**.
3. Turn on **Fall Detection**, and choose **Always on** if you're asked.

HEADS UP

It can't catch every fall

Apple says the watch can't detect all falls, and very active people may set it off during hard exercise. A slow slide to the floor may not register. It's a helpful backup, not a guarantee.

GOOD TO KNOW

Want the full story?

Bill's Home Tech has separate guides on the Apple Watch and on medical alert systems that go into much more detail. This chapter is just enough to make sure it's switched on.

PART 3

Your Android Phone

Emergency SOS, emergency and medical info, the Personal Safety app, Car Crash Detection, location for 911, and satellite help on Google Pixel and Samsung Galaxy phones.

CHAPTER 17

Emergency SOS on Android and Pixel

On Android 12 and later, including Google Pixel phones, **Emergency SOS** lets you call for help by pressing the **power button five times or more**, quickly. Depending on your choices, it can also share your location with your emergency contacts and record video.

Using it in an emergency

1. Press the **power button** 5 times or more, quickly.
2. Depending on your settings, either touch and hold inside the red circle for 3 seconds, or wait for the automatic countdown.
3. Your phone calls emergency services, and any other actions you chose (like sharing your location) begin.

Setting it up the first time

1. Open **Settings**, then tap **Safety & emergency**, then **Emergency SOS**.
2. Tap **Start setup** at the bottom.
3. Confirm the emergency number is correct (911 in the U.S.) and tap **Next**.
4. Tap **Start setup** next to sharing with contacts, then **Add contact**, and choose what to share.
5. Allow the Personal Safety app to use your location **While using the app**.
6. Decide whether to turn on emergency video recording. It's optional.
7. Choose how SOS starts: **Use touch & hold to start actions** (a confirmation step), or **Start actions immediately after countdown**. With the countdown option you can turn on **Play alarm sound**.
8. Tap **Done**.

> TIP
> **Touch & hold is the gentler choice**
>
> If you worry about calling by accident, choose **Touch & hold to start actions**. You'll have to hold the red circle for 3 seconds before anything happens. You can change this later under **Settings > Safety & emergency > Emergency SOS**, then the Settings icon under "How it works."

HEADS UP

Two situations where SOS won't work

Google says Emergency SOS doesn't work in **airplane mode** or when **Battery Saver** is on. You can still dial 911 the normal way.

GOOD TO KNOW

The emergency menu on a Pixel

On Pixel 6 and later, pressing **power and volume up together** opens a menu with an **Emergency** button. That's another way to reach the emergency dialer and its slider.

CHAPTER 18

Emergency SOS on Samsung Galaxy

Samsung Galaxy phones have their own version of Emergency SOS. To start it, press the **Side button** (the power button) **five times in a row**. Samsung gives you a few extra choices, which are worth setting thoughtfully.

Set it up

1. Open **Settings**, tap **Safety and emergency**, then **Emergency SOS**.
2. Decide on **Require swipe to call**. When on, you must swipe the SOS Call icon after the five presses. This helps prevent accidental calls.
3. Tap **Countdown** and choose how many seconds you want before emergency actions start. Longer gives you more time to cancel a mistake.
4. Go back and decide on **Play warning sound**, which makes a loud sound when SOS starts.
5. Tap **Emergency number to call** and make sure it shows your local emergency number (911).
6. Turn on **Send SOS to emergency contacts**, tap **Continue**, and allow the permissions it asks for.
7. Tap **Add contacts**, choose your people, and tap **Done**.

What your contacts receive

When SOS is used, Samsung says your location, a photo and a voice recording are sent the first time, and then updated locations every 15 minutes for 24 hours until the alert is stopped. Your phone needs an active SIM card to send the alert.

HEADS UP

About "Custom number"

Samsung lets you choose a custom number instead of 911. Please don't, unless you have a very specific reason. A custom number needs a working cell connection, while 911 can go through on almost any network with a signal.

GOOD TO KNOW

Emergency calls without your own service

Samsung notes you can call 911 even with no SIM card or no service from your own carrier, as long as some network signal is nearby. If you see "Emergency calls only" at the top of the screen, that's what it means.

CHAPTER 19

Emergency and Medical Info on Android

Like Apple's Medical ID, Android lets you store medical details and emergency contacts that a responder can see from your locked screen. Where you enter them depends on your phone.

On a Pixel (and many other Android phones)

1. Open the **Safety** app (in the Play Store it's called **Personal Safety**).
2. Sign in to your Google Account if asked.
3. Tap **Your info**.
4. Tap **Medical information** and fill in items such as blood type, allergies and medications.
5. Go back, tap **Emergency contacts**, then **Add contact**, and choose a person.
6. To show this on your locked screen, tap **Emergency info access**, then **Show when locked**.
7. To send it to emergency services when you call, tap **Emergency info access**, then **Share during emergency call**.

On a Samsung Galaxy

1. Open **Settings**, tap **Safety and emergency**, then **Emergency contacts**.
2. Tap **Add emergency contact**, choose people, and tap **Done**.
3. Go back to **Safety and emergency** and tap **Medical info** (tap **Confirm** if asked).
4. Fill in Medical conditions, Allergies, Current medications and Blood type, then tap **Save**.

How a responder sees it

From a locked Android phone, swipe up, tap **Emergency**, then **View emergency info**. Try it on your own phone; looking doesn't call anyone.

HEADS UP

Anyone can see it, so keep it medical

Google reminds you that anyone who picks up your phone can see your lock screen message and emergency information. List what a responder needs. Leave out ID numbers, account numbers and anything private.

CHAPTER 20

Emergency Sharing and Safety Check

The **Personal Safety** app on Pixel and many Android phones has two features that keep family in the loop: **Emergency sharing**, which shares your live location right now, and **Safety Check**, which checks on you later and shares your location only if you don't answer.

Emergency sharing

1. Open the **Safety** app.
2. Tap **Emergency sharing**.
3. Choose who to share your real-time location with, and add a short message if you like.
4. Tap **Share**. It ends on its own after 24 hours, or when you tap **Stop**.

Your contacts get a text with your name, a Google Maps link to your live location, your battery level and your message. When sharing stops, they get another text saying it ended.

Safety Check

1. Open the **Safety** app and tap **Safety Check**.
2. Pick a **Reason** (for example, walking alone) and a **Duration**.
3. Tap **Next**, choose your contacts, and tap **Start**.
4. When the time is up, your phone alerts you for 60 seconds. Tap **I'm OK** to end it, or **Call 911** if you need help.
5. If you don't respond within 60 seconds, emergency sharing begins automatically.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the phone dies during a Safety Check

Google says the Safety Check stays active even if your phone turns off or loses signal, and it shares your last known location at the scheduled time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Samsung has its own Emergency sharing

On Galaxy phones, look in **Settings > Safety and emergency > Emergency sharing**. You can attach pictures and a short audio recording to the message your contacts receive.

CHAPTER 21

Car Crash Detection on Pixel

On **Pixel 4a and later**, including Fold models, **Car Crash Detection** can recognize a severe car crash using the phone's location, motion sensors and nearby sounds. If you don't respond, it calls emergency services and shares your approximate location. It's available in the U.S. and a list of other countries.

Turn it on

1. Open the **Safety** app.
2. Tap **Features**.
3. Scroll to **Car Crash Detection** and tap **Set up**.
4. When asked about location, tap **Allow while app is in use**. When asked about microphone and physical activity, tap **Allow**.
5. Optional: under Car Crash Detection, choose **Emergency Sharing** so your contacts are texted your location after a crash.

What happens after a crash

- The phone vibrates, sounds an alarm and asks out loud and on screen if you need help.
- You have 60 seconds to answer. Say "Cancel" or tap **I'm OK** if you're fine. Say "Emergency" or drag the slider to call.
- If you don't respond, the phone turns on the speaker, calls 911, says a car crash happened and shares your approximate location.

HEADS UP

When it can't help

It needs a SIM card, doesn't work in airplane mode or with Battery Saver on, and only works in the country of your phone's SIM, not while roaming abroad. Google also says it may not detect every crash.

CHAPTER 22

How Android Sends Your Location to 911

When you call or text 911 from an Android phone, **Emergency Location Service** (ELS) can send your phone's location directly to emergency responders. It uses GPS, Wi-Fi and cell towers to find the most accurate spot it can.

What you should know

- ELS only works when you call or text an emergency number. It isn't tracking you the rest of the time.
- Emergency services receive the location straight from your phone, not through Google.
- Even if ELS is off, your mobile carrier may still send your location during an emergency call or text.
- If you call 911 while roaming, your carrier may charge extra to send your location.

Check that it's on

1. Open **Settings** and tap **Location**.
2. Tap **Location services**.
3. Tap **Emergency Location Service** (or **Google Emergency Location Service**) and make sure it's on.
4. On a Samsung Galaxy, you'll also find it under **Settings > Safety and emergency > Emergency Location Service**.

TIP

Leave it on

It's on by default for a good reason. There's no cost, and it only acts when you reach out for help.

GOOD TO KNOW

On a Pixel you can read your location aloud

When you dial 911 on a Pixel, an Emergency Number screen can show your street address, a Plus Code, or latitude and longitude, so you can read it to the dispatcher if they ask.

CHAPTER 23

Satellite SOS on Google Pixel

On Google Pixel phones from the **Pixel 9** on (but **not the Pixel 9a**), **Satellite SOS** lets you text emergency services when there's no cell signal or Wi-Fi. It's available in the U.S. and a growing list of other countries.

How to use it

1. Go outside with a clear view of the sky.
2. Dial **911**. If you have no mobile or Wi-Fi network, the dialer shows a **Satellite SOS** option.
3. Tap **Satellite SOS**, then **Use Satellite SOS**, then **Start**.
4. Fill out the emergency questionnaire.
5. Choose **Notify** to share your emergency with your emergency contacts, or **Don't notify**.
6. Follow the on-screen prompts to point your phone at the satellite.
7. Once connected, emergency services should reply by text within a few minutes. Stay outside to receive replies. Tap **End** when you're done.

HEADS UP

Keep Google Messages as your texting app

Satellite SOS requires **Google Messages** as your default messaging app. If you switch to a different texting app, you'll get a notice that Satellite SOS is no longer available.

GOOD TO KNOW

What it costs

Google says Satellite SOS is included at no extra charge for the first two years after you activate an eligible Pixel. Google hasn't published a price for afterward.

CHAPTER 24

Samsung and Carrier Satellite Texting

Some satellite features come from your **cell carrier** instead of the phone maker. That's how most Samsung Galaxy owners get satellite texting, and it's an option for many other phones, including some older iPhones. What you get depends on your carrier, your plan and your phone.

Verizon

- Verizon partners with a company called Skylo for satellite SOS and texting on select Android phones.
- Supported phones include the Samsung Galaxy S25 family and newer flagships such as the Galaxy Z Fold7 and Z Flip7, and Google Pixel 9 and Pixel 10 models.
- Coverage includes the continental U.S., Hawaii and parts of Alaska.
- Satellite texting is plain text only: no pictures, group features or attachments.
- Google Messages must be your default texting app, and you must be outside with a view of the sky.

T-Mobile T-Satellite

- T-Mobile's **T-Satellite** uses Starlink satellites and works on many recent phones from several brands.
- It's included with T-Mobile's Experience Beyond plan. Other customers can add it, at about $10 a month as of November 2026 (T-Mobile calls that a limited-time price).
- It supports texting and location sharing, and now some picture messages, audio messages and select apps.
- Eligible phones can text 911 over T-Satellite, except iPhone 14 and later, which use Apple's own emergency satellite service instead.

TIP

Ask your carrier one simple question

Call or visit your carrier and ask: "Does my phone and my plan include satellite texting, and does it include texting 911?" Ask what it costs, too. Plans change often, so get the answer for your exact line.

HEADS UP

Satellite service can be slow or unavailable

Carriers say plainly that satellite service, including texting 911, may be delayed, limited or unavailable. Treat it as a backup when nothing else works.

PART 4

911, Alerts & Practicing Safely

What really happens when you call 911 from a cell phone, when texting 911 works, how to manage emergency alerts, and how to practice without bothering a dispatcher.

CHAPTER 25

What Happens When You Call 911 from a Cell Phone

Calling 911 from a cell phone is a little different from calling from a home landline. A landline is tied to one address. A cell phone could be anywhere, so the dispatcher's first job is to figure out where you are. Knowing how that works helps you help them.

What the 911 center receives

FCC rules require wireless carriers to give the 911 center your phone number, the location of the cell tower handling the call, and an estimate of your location within certain accuracy limits. On top of that, iPhones and Android phones can send a more precise location from the phone itself where supported (Android calls this Emergency Location Service, see Chapter 22, *How Android Sends Your Location to 911*). Your Medical ID may be shared too, if you turned that on.

What you should do on the call

1. Stay as calm as you can, and say **where you are** right away: the address, or the road and nearest crossroad or mile marker.
2. Say **what's happening**: "My husband fell and can't get up," "There's a car in the ditch."
3. Give your **cell phone number** so they can call you back if the call drops.
4. Answer their questions and follow their instructions.
5. **Don't hang up** until the call-taker tells you to.

HEADS UP

Your location is an estimate

Phone location is very good but not perfect, especially inside large buildings, in apartments with many floors, or in the country where towers are far apart. Telling the dispatcher where you are is still the most reliable way to be found.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the call drops

If you're disconnected, call back. The dispatcher may also try to call you, which is another reason to give your number.

TIP

Know your address the way a stranger would

Practice saying your full address, including your township, and the nearest crossroad. In rural parts of Portage County, house numbers can be hard to see from the road, so a description like "white farmhouse, red barn, north side" helps too.

CHAPTER 26

Texting 911

In some places, you can send a regular text message to **911**. This can be a lifeline if you're deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled, if you're having a medical problem that makes speaking hard, or if speaking out loud would put you in danger.

The rule to remember

The FCC says to **always make a voice call to 911 if you can**. A voice call gives the dispatcher more information, faster. Texting is for when you can't safely call.

Is texting 911 available where you live?

Text-to-911 is only available in certain areas. It's up to each local 911 call center to decide whether to accept texts. The FCC keeps a list of areas that support it, updated monthly, on its website (search "FCC text to 911"). If you send a text to 911 where it isn't available, your carrier must send an automatic **bounce-back** message telling you to call instead.

How to text 911, if you must

1. Open your normal texting app and start a new message.
2. In the "To" box, type **911**.
3. In your first message, give your **location** and **what kind of help you need** (police, fire, ambulance).
4. Keep messages short and plain. Answer the dispatcher's questions.
5. If you get a bounce-back message, try to call or use another way to reach help.

HEADS UP

Not every app can text 911

The FCC says apps that only text other app users, or work through social media, aren't required to support texting 911. Use your phone's built-in texting app.

GOOD TO KNOW

Satellite texting is different

Text-to-911 uses the cell network. Satellite SOS on iPhone and Pixel is a separate service for when there is no network at all. See Chapter 11, *Emergency SOS via Satellite* and Chapter 23, *Satellite SOS on Google Pixel*.

CHAPTER 27

Emergency Alerts on Your Phone

Wireless Emergency Alerts are the loud, unusual alerts that sometimes buzz every phone in the room at once: a tornado warning, a missing child, a boil-water notice. They come from authorized government agencies through your carrier. You don't sign up, and they don't cost anything.

The kinds of alerts

Alert type	What it covers
National Alerts	Issued at the national level for a national emergency. You can't turn these off. (These used to be called Presidential Alerts.)
Imminent Threat Alerts	Severe weather and other immediate dangers to life or safety in your area.
AMBER Alerts	Urgent bulletins about abducted children.
Public Safety Messages	Important safety information, like a boil-water advisory or shelter location.

Change which alerts you get

Phone	Where to look
iPhone	**Settings > Notifications**, scroll to the bottom to **Government Alerts**. Turn AMBER Alerts, Public Safety Alerts and Emergency Alerts on or off. Look for **Always Play Sound** so emergency alerts sound even in Silent mode.
Google Pixel	**Settings > Notifications > Wireless emergency alerts**.
Samsung Galaxy	**Settings > Safety and emergency > Wireless emergency alerts**. Tap **Emergency alert history** to read past alerts.

TIP

My advice: leave them on

The FCC recommends against turning these off, and I agree. A tornado warning at 3 a.m. is exactly the alert you want. If one type truly bothers you, turn off just that one, not all of them.

SCAM ALERT

Real alerts don't ask for money

A genuine emergency alert never asks you to call a number to pay, click a link to "verify" your account, or give personal information. If a text claims to be an emergency alert and wants any of those, it's a scam.

CHAPTER 28

Practicing Safely Without Calling 911

You can and should practice these features, but please **never place a test call or text to 911**. Apple and Google built safe demos for exactly this. Here's what you can safely try.

Safe to try any time

- **Look at your Medical ID or emergency info from the Lock Screen**, as shown in Chapter 9, *How Responders See Your Medical ID* and Chapter 19, *Emergency and Medical Info on Android*. Viewing it doesn't call anyone.
- **Open the Emergency SOS settings** and read through the choices. Opening a menu calls no one.
- **Practice a Check In or Safety Check** with a family member who knows you're testing. See Chapter 15, *Check In: Let Family Know You Got Home* and Chapter 20, *Emergency Sharing and Safety Check*.

The iPhone satellite demo

1. Go outside with a clear view of the sky.
2. Open **Settings** and tap **Emergency SOS**.
3. Scroll down to Emergency SOS via satellite and tap **Try Demo**.
4. Follow the prompts to see the questionnaire and practice pointing your phone at a satellite. Apple says the demo does not contact emergency services.
5. Another way in: open **Control Center**, tap the cellular button, tap **Satellite**, then **Try Demo**.

The Pixel Satellite SOS demo

1. Open **Settings**, tap **Safety & emergency**, then **Satellite SOS**.
2. Follow the demo instructions.
3. Your mobile network is turned off temporarily during the demo, and turns back on automatically when you exit.

STAY SAFE

What not to practice

Don't practice the five-press shortcut or let an SOS countdown run out. Those place real calls. If you want to see the iPhone sliders, hold the buttons just until they appear and then press the side button or tap **Cancel**. If an alarm starts, tap **Stop**.

TIP

Practice the words, too

Sit with a family member and role-play a 911 call: say your address, describe the problem, give your number. It feels silly for a minute and it's worth it.

CHAPTER 29

Called 911 by Mistake? Handling and Preventing Accidental Calls

Accidental 911 calls happen, especially with phones carried in tight pockets, purses or on a belt. They're nothing to be ashamed of, and there's a simple, right way to handle them.

If you call 911 by mistake

1. **Don't hang up.** If you hang up, the dispatcher may think something is wrong and send someone to check on you.
2. Stay on the line and say calmly that it was an accident and you don't need help.
3. Stay on until the call-taker tells you it's OK to hang up.

Make accidental calls less likely

Phone	What to change
iPhone	In **Settings > Emergency SOS**, consider turning off **Call with 5 Button Presses**. Keep Call Quietly off so the alarm warns you.
Pixel and Android	In **Settings > Safety & emergency > Emergency SOS**, choose **Touch & hold to start actions**.
Samsung Galaxy	In **Settings > Safety and emergency > Emergency SOS**, turn on **Require swipe to call**, choose a longer **Countdown**, and leave **Play warning sound** on.
Any phone	Use a case that covers the buttons a little, and keep the phone in its own pocket away from keys and coins. The FCC also suggests locking your screen.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your contacts got a text by mistake

If an SOS went out by accident, your emergency contacts may get an alert. Call or text them right away to say you're fine, and on iPhone stop the location sharing as shown in Chapter 7, *Emergency Contacts and What They're Told*.

TIP

Don't turn it all off

If you keep calling by accident, adjust the settings above rather than switching Emergency SOS off completely. A small change is usually enough.

PART 5

Family, Scams & Getting Help

Setting this up for someone you love, an honest comparison with medical alert systems, the scams that use the word "emergency," and where to turn when you'd like a hand.

CHAPTER 30

Setting This Up for an Aging Parent

Families often look into these features because they worry about Mom or Dad living alone. That is a loving reason. The most important step, though, isn't in any menu: it's the conversation first.

Start with consent

- Ask before you set anything up. It's their phone, their medical information and their location.
- Explain what each feature does and who will see what. "If you call 911 with this, I'll get a text with where you are" is clear and respectful.
- Let them choose what goes in their Medical ID, and which features to use. Some people love Check In; others would rather call.
- If a parent has memory problems, involve whoever holds their health care power of attorney, and their doctor, in decisions about tracking and monitoring.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why consent makes it work better

A parent who understands and agrees to a feature is far more likely to keep it on, keep the phone charged, and use it when it counts. A feature set up behind someone's back tends to get switched off.

A sit-down plan for the two of you

1. Check the phone model and update its software (Chapter 3, *Which Phone and Which Software Do You Have?*).
2. Add yourself and one or two others as emergency contacts (Chapter 7, *Emergency Contacts and What They're Told* or Chapter 19, *Emergency and Medical Info on Android*).
3. Fill in the Medical ID together, using their medication bottles or a list from the pharmacy (Chapter 8, *Setting Up Your Medical ID*).
4. Choose SOS settings that suit their hands and habits (Chapter 6, *Choosing Your iPhone SOS Settings*, Chapter 17, *Emergency SOS on Android and Pixel* or Chapter 18, *Emergency SOS on Samsung Galaxy*). If they have arthritis or tremors, a confirmation step or longer countdown can prevent accidental calls.

5. Confirm Crash Detection is on, and Fall Detection if they wear an Apple Watch (Chapter 10, *Crash Detection on iPhone*, Chapter 16, *A Quick Word on Apple Watch Fall Detection*).
6. Practice viewing the Medical ID from the Lock Screen together (Chapter 28, *Practicing Safely Without Calling 911*).
7. Write the key steps on a card they keep by the phone. The cheat-sheet in Chapter 36, *Your Emergency Features Cheat-Sheet* is a good start.

TIP

Make charging a habit

Pick one spot, like the nightstand or kitchen counter, where the phone charges every night. A charger by the bed also means the phone is within reach if they need it at night.

GOOD TO KNOW

This pairs with Bill's Device Training

If you'd like a patient, unhurried session to set all of this up and practice it together, that's exactly what my Device Training is for. See Chapter 35, *When to Call Bill*.

CHAPTER 31

Phone Features vs. a Medical Alert System

A fair question is whether a phone with Emergency SOS and Fall Detection means they can skip a medical alert system. The honest answer: it depends on the person, and for some people the answer is no. Here's how they compare in general.

Question	Phone features	Monitored medical alert
Who answers?	911 directly, plus a text to your contacts	Usually a monitoring center that can call family, a neighbor or 911
Has to be with you?	Yes, and charged	Pendant or watch worn all the time; some base units
Works if you're confused or can't press buttons?	Only automatic features (crash, fall) can help	Some offer automatic fall detection too
Monthly cost	None for the built-in features	Usually a monthly fee
Good fit for	Active people who always carry a phone	People who live alone, fall often, or may not carry a phone

STAY SAFE

A phone does not replace a medical alert system

If someone has fallen before, lives alone with a serious health condition, or often leaves the phone in another room, a monitored medical alert system may be the safer choice. Talk it over with their doctor and family. Bill's Home Tech has a separate guide on medical alert systems.

Using both

Many families use both: a medical alert pendant for the home, and phone features for when Mom is out driving or walking. They don't conflict, and each covers gaps in the other.

HEADS UP

Shop slowly

If you decide on a medical alert system, compare a few companies, read the contract, and ask about cancellation fees and equipment returns. Never buy one from a caller who phoned you out of the blue. See Chapter 33, *Scams That Use "Emergency" and "Medical Alert"*.

CHAPTER 32

Before You Head Off the Grid

Fishing trips, hunting season, a drive through the national forest, a visit to family in the mountains: these are the times satellite features shine. A few minutes of preparation makes them work when you need them.

The night before

1. Charge your phone fully, and pack a charged backup battery and cable.
2. Update your phone's software if an update is waiting.
3. Check your satellite features are available: try the demo in Chapter 28, *Practicing Safely Without Calling 911*.
4. On iPhone, make sure iMessage is on and your SIM is active, so Messages via satellite works (Chapter 12, *Messages and More via Satellite*).
5. On a Pixel or Galaxy with satellite, make sure **Google Messages** is your default texting app.
6. Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back, or start a Check In or Safety Check.

While you're out

- Keep the phone in an inside pocket in cold weather; cold drains batteries quickly.
- Use Low Power Mode (iPhone) or Battery Saver (Android) to stretch the battery, but remember Google says Emergency SOS and Car Crash Detection don't work with Battery Saver on.
- If you need help and have no signal, get to open sky before trying satellite.

HEADS UP

Satellite isn't instant

Connecting and sending can take a few minutes, longer under trees. Stay put, keep the phone pointed where it tells you, and be patient.

TIP

Paper still works

A paper map and a written list of emergency numbers don't need batteries. Keep both in the glove box.

CHAPTER 33

Scams That Use "Emergency" and "Medical Alert"

Scammers love words like "emergency," "urgent" and "medical alert," because they make people act fast. Here are the patterns to watch for.

The "free medical alert" robocall

The Federal Trade Commission has taken action against several operations that robocalled seniors about a "free" medical alert device. Callers falsely claimed a friend or relative had already bought it for you, or that a respected health group recommended it. The "free" device came with a monthly monitoring charge, and some people were charged right away.

SCAM ALERT

Red flags on a medical alert call

A recorded voice calling you out of the blue. "Someone already paid for it." A request for your card or bank number to "cover shipping." Pressure to decide today. Hang up. A recorded sales call is illegal unless you gave that company written permission to call you.

The fake family emergency

A call or text says a grandchild is hurt or in jail and needs money right now, often with a plea to keep it secret. The voice may even sound like them. Hang up and call your family member at the number you already have. A family "safe word" that only you know can help.

"Your SOS service is expiring"

Built-in Emergency SOS and the current satellite features on iPhone and Pixel don't require you to give anyone your card number to keep working (see Chapter 14, *Which iPhones Get Satellite, and Is It Still Free?*). If a call, text or email says you must pay or "verify" to keep emergency features on, it's a scam. Carrier add-ons like T-Satellite are billed through your regular carrier account, so check by calling the number on your bill.

SCAM ALERT

The golden rules

Real emergency services, Apple, Google and your carrier will never ask for gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency, or a code sent to your phone. When in doubt, hang up, and call a number you trust.

TIP

Report it

You can report scams to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. If you've lost money, call your bank right away.

CHAPTER 34

A Plain-English Glossary

Emergency features come with their own vocabulary. Here are the words you'll meet in this guide and on your phone.

Word	What it means
911 dispatcher / call-taker	The trained person who answers 911 calls and sends help.
Emergency SOS	The quick button shortcut that calls 911 and alerts your emergency contacts.
Emergency contacts	The family or friends your phone notifies after you call for help.
Medical ID / Medical info	Your medical details and contacts, readable from your locked screen.
Lock Screen	What you see before you enter your passcode.
Crash Detection	A feature that senses a severe car crash and calls for help if you don't respond.
Fall Detection	An Apple Watch feature that senses a hard fall.
Satellite SOS	Texting emergency services through a satellite when there's no cell signal.
Check In / Safety Check	Features that tell family you arrived, or alert them if you didn't.
ELS (Emergency Location Service)	Android's way of sending your location to 911 when you call.
Text-to-911	Texting 911 over the cell network, where your local call center accepts it.
WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts)	Government alerts that sound on phones in an area.
Bounce-back message	An automatic reply saying text-to-911 isn't available, so you should call.
Countdown	The few seconds before an automatic SOS call, when you can still cancel.

TIP

No need to memorize

Come back here whenever a word trips you up. Knowing the words also makes it harder for anyone to use jargon to rush you.

CHAPTER 35

When to Call Bill

This guide is meant to help you set up your phone's safety features calmly and on your own terms. But some things are easier with a friendly person beside you, and safety settings are worth getting right.

Good reasons to call

- You'd like someone to sit with you and set up Emergency SOS, Medical ID and emergency contacts from start to finish.
- You're setting this up for a parent and want a patient, neutral person to explain it to both of you.
- You're not sure whether your phone or carrier supports satellite texting, or what it will cost.
- Your phone keeps calling 911 by accident and you want the settings adjusted.
- You got a call, text or email about a medical alert device or an "expiring" safety service and want a second opinion before you do anything.
- You'd like to practice with the demos, outside, with someone who's done it before.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Device Training

This guide pairs with my **Device Training** service: an unhurried, one-on-one session where we set up these features on your own phone and practice them together until they feel natural.

SCAM ALERT

A quick check beats regret

If anyone pressures you to pay, share a code, or act right now about an emergency or medical alert offer, stop and call me first at **(330) 200-8042**. I'd much rather spend two minutes reassuring you.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and Bill's Home Tech serves **Portage County, Ohio**. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. With 30+ years of professional experience, I promise there's no question too

basic.

STAY SAFE

In an emergency, call 911, not me

If someone is hurt or in danger, call 911 right away. I'm here for setup, questions and peace of mind, not emergencies.

— Bill

CHAPTER 36

Your Emergency Features Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down to what you'll reach for most.

Calling for help

Phone	Do this
iPhone	Hold the side button and a volume button, then drag **Emergency Call**. Or press the side button 5 times quickly (if Call with 5 Button Presses is on).
Pixel / Android	Press the power button 5 times or more, then hold the red circle or wait for the countdown.
Samsung Galaxy	Press the Side button 5 times in a row.
Any locked phone	Swipe to the passcode screen, tap **Emergency**, dial 911.

Where the settings live

I want to…	Go here
iPhone SOS settings	**Settings > Emergency SOS**
iPhone Medical ID	**Health** app, tap your picture, then **Medical ID**
Pixel SOS settings	**Settings > Safety & emergency > Emergency SOS**
Pixel medical info	**Safety** app > **Your info**
Samsung SOS and medical info	**Settings > Safety and emergency**
Emergency alerts	iPhone: **Settings > Notifications** (bottom). Pixel: **Settings > Notifications > Wireless emergency alerts**.

Staying safe, the short list

1. If you can call 911 and talk, do that first.
2. Say where you are right away, and don't hang up until told.
3. Called by mistake? Stay on the line and say it was an accident.
4. Never place a test call to 911; use the demos instead.
5. Keep your phone charged and with you.
6. Nobody real needs your card number to keep SOS working.

Keep this handy

Keep handy	Fill in
My phone model and software	_____
My emergency contacts	_____
My doctor and pharmacy	_____
My address and nearest crossroad	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

You've done something important

Most phone owners never set these features up. You now know how to call for help, share what responders need, and keep your family in the loop. Go gently, and call me any time you'd like a hand. — Bill, (330) 200-8042