When to Call 9-1-1

San Diego County’s emergency access number for fire, police or medical emergencies is “9-1-1.”

At times you may not be sure whether it is appropriate to use this emergency number for medical problems. Here are some guidelines that may help you decide if this is a real medical emergency.

A. Is the person (or you) having difficulty breathing?
   - Not breathing?
   - Labored breathing?
   - Choking?
   - Wheezing or suffering from an allergic reaction (hives, redness, facial swelling)?
   - Is this a drowning or near drowning?

B. Is the person having chest pain or pressure? (Possible heart attack)

C. Is the person having severe abdominal pain?

D. Is the person unconscious?
   - Any fall or other type of injury?
   - An unexplained episode of unconsciousness?
   - A seizure (shaking of arms and legs accompanying the unconsciousness)?
   - Is the patient a diabetic?

C. Is the person dizzy or lightheaded (Possible stroke)?
   - Can the person move his/her arms and legs equally?
   - Is the person having slurred speech or difficulty speaking or walking?
   - Is this person confused or disoriented?

F. Is there uncontrolled bleeding?
   - "Pumping out" rapidly?
   - Bleeding slowly but continuously oozing?

G. Is this possibly a poisoning or an overdose?
   - Did the person take too many pills or other type of medication (including Aspirin or Tylenol)?
   - If ingestion was unintentional, and person is awake and alert, Call Poison Information 1-800-222-1222

H. Does the person appear to have a fracture, or broken bone?

I. Is the person having the worst headache of his/her life?

J. If there is any doubt in your mind, call 9-1-1.

Be prepared to:
   - Speak clearly and slowly
   - Give the exact location
   - Describe the situation
   - Answer questions from the 9-1-1 operator
   - Follow instructions from the 9-1-1 operator
   - DO NOT HANG UP until told to do so