

# Columnist: Your smart watch can assist if you fall

October 25 2023, by Jim Rossman, Tribune News Service

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Last week I wrote about setting up Amazon Echo devices to enable making phone calls with your voice, which could be helpful in an emergency. I mentioned falling and not having a phone within reach to

call for help.

This week I received an email from a reader, "My friend and I bought Apple Watches which notify family if we fall. On Sept. 11, I fell in my [parking lot](#). The [watch](#) notified my husband and my daughter and let out a loud alarm. Please include the Apple Watch in your column."

As a recent purchaser of an Apple Watch Series 9, I took the opportunity to set up some of the emergency notification features that could help me if I fall.

Apple Watches since Series 4 have had the ability to detect hard falls. Apple has added the ability for your watch to call for help if it senses you've had a hard fall and are not moving.

You can set up fall detection in the Watch app from a paired iPhone under Emergency SOS.

If the watch detects a hard fall, it will tap you on the wrist and sound an alarm. If you don't need help, you can choose to dismiss the alert. If the watch detects you are moving, it will wait for you to respond and won't automatically call emergency services.

If the watch detects you have not been moving for about a minute, it will call emergency services automatically. If the watch does call emergency services, you can also have the watch send messages to any contacts you set up in the Medical ID section of the Health app.

Your emergency contacts will get a text that you've fallen, emergency services have been notified and they'll get your current location.

To call [emergency services](#), your Apple Watch needs to be within range of your iPhone, or the Watch needs to be a model with a cellular radio

built in. Cellular-enabled Apple Watches need to be added to your cell phone plan to make calls.

I should mention the Apple Watch will not know if you've taken a soft fall. If you slip out of a chair or slip off the bed or lose your balance and fall in the yard, the watch will not know your situation.

You can still use the Apple Watch to call for help. If you hold down the watch's side button, you'll see an option to make an emergency SOS call. Slide your finger from left to right and the watch will make the call.

You can also use the Apple Watch to make regular phone calls to anyone. Press the digital crown and scroll down to Phone and you'll see your contacts or dial a number manually.

Apple don't have the market cornered on fall detection. Samsung's Galaxy Watches and Google Pixel watches can also call for help if it detects a hard fall. There are also medical alert companies that have watches as part of their offerings.

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Citation: Columnist: Your smart watch can assist if you fall (2023, October 25) retrieved 21 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-10-columnist-smart-fall.html>

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