

Cell Phones and 911

When new technology arrives so does some unknown issues. The way of the landline telephone from your house is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. The attractiveness of flexibility, multiple abilities and portability of the cell phone has changed the way the world communicates.

Not only for business, but for pleasure as well. In recent years the landline telephone has long been a way summoning help from agencies like Police and Fire. In the last 25 years we have had the ability to call for help from a 7-digit phone number to a 3 digit emergency number.

The rapid advancement of computers has allowed the new 3 digit emergency number to display a screen of information including the caller address, name of the person who owns the phone and even the ability to bring a satellite map of the area around the place where the call is coming from.

This has been a great asset to all responding agencies by receiving more accurate information in shorter period of time. When most people become excited the information is either inaccurate or harder to obtain. Now that cell phones are affordable and in an effort to cut expenses the removal of the landline telephone from the home has brought the inaccurate information issue back to the forefront.

Cell phone technology uses a series radio towers to transmit signals to and from cell phones all over the country. The problem starts with you never know what tower your telephone will be hitting when dialing 911.

For people who live in the corner of adjoining counties may find themselves dialing 911 to a tower that is close to them in there county that is busy, then the signal will hit the next closest tower which might route it to a dispatch center in the neighboring county. This is where the fun begins.

In the past decade the Federal Communication Commission, Cell phone manufacturers, Phone Service Providers and the Federal Government has had massive success in trying to close the gap on the issue. You will notice the efforts by the additional charges that have been added to your bill over the years.

One process is triangulation. We now have the ability to triangulate (Track) a cell phone by using signal strength on 3 more towers in a triangle configuration and locate people. Though this is a positive step in the right direction this process uses a lot resources and is time consuming and not good for an emergency situation.

Most Dispatch Centers have contingency plans in place to deal with these situations. Much like triangulation there are still some time factor issues because of the gathering of the information then getting that info to the appropriate dispatch center to summons help.

The best solution to the problem is always know where you are at no matter where you are. Most communities have enacted laws concerning address signs that have to be posted by the road in front of the house.

Always note the road name or number that you are driving on and look for the address signs as you drive down the road, this information will help reduce the amount of time dispatch needs to help locate you. What county you are in will help immensely, but not readily available.

If you are outside your area, but visit the area frequently contact local authorities or someone locally and get some information about where you are staying ahead of time.

With the new iPhones, Ipads, Blackberry and Apps, it looks like we are getting closer to a permanent solution to locating your phone and giving you the info as to what county you are in, the address, who are the responding agencies are and possibly make the call for you.

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