

Phones and 911

If you have ever called 911 you are aware of the many questions asked by dispatchers. There are reasons for these questions and reasons behind why dispatchers are finding their jobs harder. With new technologies, namely cell phones and VoIP (internet phones), comes as even bigger problem than before. To help you understand how 911 or E-911 works we will break it apart.

E-911 or Enhanced 911

Enhanced 911 was developed years ago to aid in locating a caller. This system is fully integrated into your existing phone line and has been for years. When you call 911, your name, address and geographical location is automatically displayed to 911 dispatchers. This information allows them to send the closest unit to help you during an emergency. Even if the phone call is disconnected or loses service, emergency help can still find you. The networks in our area are continually upgrading to make E911 work on cell and internet phones, but there are many obstacles to overcome such as terrain and lack of enough towers to properly cover our response area. As you well know, cell coverage in our area is sub-standard on any network, and internet phone service is not offered in many areas of the Alum Creek Fire District. As you can see, each type of phone service has good and bad attributes and the E911 service varies.

Traditional Phone Line

Advantages:

1. E911 works locally and is proven to work correctly.
2. Not dependent on electricity, phone lines usually work even when damaged.

Disadvantages:

1. Mobility – limited even with cordless (because electric is needed to operate).

Cell Phone

Advantages:

1. Battery powered, GPS locator optional, works without electricity.
2. Ability to stay on the line with 911 dispatchers, out of harm's way.

Disadvantages:

1. E911 may or may not work to pin point your location.
2. Service in rural areas is spotty, may or may not work.- especially on analog signal.
3. Battery powered, if battery goes dead.....

ViOP Internet Phone

Advantages:

1. Unless phone lines are out in the area, there are none.

Disadvantages:

1. E911 may or may not work.
2. Must have electricity to operate, if power is out between you and the cable company you may not have phone service.
3. Cable service must be up and running in your area.
4. 911 calls are routed through out-of-state centers then back to local 911, maybe.