

# Press Release

Contact: Ashtabula County Commissioners Office  
Phone: 440.576.3750

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY:** The media is invited to view a demonstration of the system upgrades at the Ashtabula County Sheriff's Office dispatch center at 9 a.m. Thursday, January 31. Cameras are welcome. Please contact Janet Boland, 9-1-1 Coordinator, at (440) 576-3795, with any questions, and to confirm your attendance.

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## ASHTABULA COUNTY'S 9-1-1 SYSTEM GETS UPGRADE

Carrying a cell phone can provide an added sense of security. But many cell users don't realize that, unless you can tell a dispatcher your exact location in an emergency, help may be farther away than you think.

To combat this potentially dangerous issue, Ashtabula County Commissioners, with the recommendation of the 911 Advisory Board, approved and completed a \$346,000 upgrade of its 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) System. The upgrade will allow dispatchers to pinpoint calls from most cell phones, sending emergency personnel to the rescue quicker, and with more accuracy.

When someone dials 9-1-1 from a landline telephone, the 9-1-1 center knows where they are immediately, even if the caller cannot speak, explained Commissioner Joe Moroski. But cell phones do not offer this level of service.

"Before the county upgraded its 9-1-1 system in early December, dispatchers were hard-pressed to determine where police, fire or rescue crews were needed," Moroski said.

"If we cannot find someone, we cannot send help to them," said Janet Boland, Ashtabula County's 9-1-1 Coordinator. "Cell phones are most often used to report car accidents and other incidents that happen outdoors. In 2007, there were more than 46,000 9-1-1 calls made in Ashtabula County. More than 50 percent of those calls were made from cell phones."

Problems arise when cell phone users don't know the specific location of an emergency. This can happen easily on Interstate 90, or in the rural areas of Ashtabula County, causing dangerous – possibly deadly – delays in getting help to the scene.

The new technology automatically locates 9-1-1 calls from GPS-enabled cell phones generally within 100 yards by interpreting latitude and longitude data and coordinating the information with digital county maps, Boland explained.

Virtually all cell phones sold within the last two or three years have this GPS chip, said Paul Mascatelli, director of IT Services for Ashtabula County.

With the support of the 911 Advisory Board, the new system updates the county's primary 9-1-1 dispatching locations – the Sheriff's Department, in Jefferson Village, and the city police departments in Geneva, Ashtabula and Conneaut – and the secondary PSAPs – Saybrook Township and Ashtabula Township fire departments, and Ashtabula Post of the Ohio Highway Patrol.

"I am very proud of our current E911 system," said Commissioner Daniel Claypool, President of the Board. "With the addition of the cutting edge technology, we will be able to locate callers in need faster, thereby saving lives. This system is still one of the most economical in Ohio. We need to continue to use this system as a model of efficiency. The citizens of Ashtabula County need to be proud of the Public Safety people operating this system in such an efficient manner."

The upgrade was funded by a 36-cent cell phone charge approved through Ohio HB361, passed in 2006. Yearly maintenance costs for the hardware and software are about \$9,000 for the first year, and about \$18,000 a year for years two through five, Mascatelli said. Annual maintenance costs for the digital mapping are about \$12,000. Additional costs to Embarq for the system's upgrades are \$1,750 per month, Mascatelli added.

Commissioner Deborah Newcomb noted that the legislation that funded this upgrade will "sunset," or expire, in 2008. If the legislation is not renewed, funding to maintain and improve the system will be lost at a time when technology is changing rapidly, she said.

The Board of Commissioners has sent correspondence to encourage state officials to continue this funding mechanism that makes every cell phone user in Ohio safer, Newcomb said.

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