

# Press Release

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## **New 9-1-1 technology helps track down law breakers**

Ashtabula County's new cell phone tracking technology was good in theory, and is even better in practice, according to Commissioner Peggy Carlo, who serves as Board liaison to the county's 9-1-1 Board.

Since it was installed earlier this year, the technology has not only helped pinpoint the location of emergency situations called in by cell phone users, but has also proven to be an effective tool for law enforcement.

"We used the tracking technology to find three people involved in calling in a bomb threat to Lakeside High School in March," Carlo said. "Two were juveniles; the one adult is being prosecuted."

The Ashtabula County Sheriff's Department is also utilizing the technology to investigate a more recent bomb threat incident at Ashtabula schools, which occurred September 16.

"Although the 9-1-1 call was placed by a 'pre-paid' cell phone, the 9-1-1 Phase II technology pinpointed an X/Y Coordinate (latitude and longitude information) that could be plotted on our new mapping system down to about 70 feet," explained Janet Boland, Ashtabula County's 9-1-1 coordinator.

Boland said the 9-1-1 mapping system has been used in numerous situations:

- Dispatchers have used it repeatedly to assist in locating a safe landing pad for Life Flights, such as MedEvac.

- A disoriented citizen who couldn't tell dispatchers her location was pinpointed on a map, and emergency personnel were sent to her aid.
- A Conneaut woman who was being attacked called 9-1-1 from her cell phone, and could only scream. The call was disconnected by her attacker after just seconds. By tracking her location through the mapping system, police were dispatched to the scene and the attacker was apprehended.
- A young child who was given a cell phone by his mother had dialed 9-1-1 more than 100 times in a week when the technology finally tracked him to his school bus. The parent was contacted and the cell phone was taken away.

“These stories have proven that the decision by the County Commissioners to invest in this technology was the right one,” Carlo said. “We are very pleased to hear that it is working so well.”

In spite of its demonstrable use as a law enforcement tool, the 9-1-1 system's primary use is to help dispatchers get first responders to emergency situations quickly. Car accidents and other incidents that happen outdoors are most often reported via cell phones. Sixty percent of 9-1-1 calls answered at the county's seven Public Safety Answering Point sites come from cell phones, Boland said.

Also, it helps find fraudulent 9-1-1 calls, such as the ones made by the student noted above. Parents often give old cell phones to children to play with which will still dial 9-1-1, even without service. Or, they give cell phones to children too young to understand how to use them properly. What parents are not aware of is when their child calls 9-1-1 and ties up the dispatchers and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response teams, Boland said. This not only costs the county money, but also ultimately could cost someone their life when emergency teams are busy responding to fraudulent 9-1-1 calls.

For more information about the 9-1-1 System, contact Janet Boland, 9-1-1 Coordinator, at (440) 576-3795.