

Help US Help YOU

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the first in a series of articles that will appear occasionally from the Bollinger County Emergency Responders

Help Emergency Responders Find You

While none of us ever wants to find ourselves in an emergency situation, most people will experience an emergency at some point. The real question is whether or not we will be prepared and know what to do when it happens.

When a home emergency occurs and you need help, call 911 for assistance. The most important thing to keep in mind in any emergency is to stay calm. This is particularly important when calling 911, so that the appropriate information can be relayed. Many emergency calls are placed from cell phones, and in this case, the call could go to a neighboring 911 dispatch center (say Perry, Cape or Madison County).

With this in mind, two key pieces of information that you will need to give the emergency dispatcher are what kind of an emergency you have and where you are located -- including the county. The dispatcher may ask you to provide additional information, if needed, and follow their directions as to what to do next.

Sometimes, emergency personnel lose precious time getting to the location where they are needed because they can't locate the home or business due to address numbers not easily visible. Similarly, if you know a bridge is out or a road is impassable, suggest an alternate route to the dispatcher. Heavy fire equipment may not be able to reach you in time if the responders have to turn around.

Here are a few important things to consider when choosing house numbers or an address sign for your home and on your mailbox:

- Use large numbers. Every single-family house should use numbers that are at least 3 inches high or a mailbox or sign. Multiple dwelling units such as apartments and duplexes, as well as non-residential buildings, should use numbers that are at least 6 inches high. The numbers should face the correct street.
- Be visible in the dark. Put the numbers on your house under a light. Numbers on a mailbox or post should be reflective or on a highly contrasting background.
- Be visible from both directions. Numbers on your mailbox should be posted on both sides. Emergency vehicles may not arrive from the same direction as your mail carrier or delivery.
- Locate your house numbers near the road or at the end of your lane/driveway. If your house is not visible from the street/road, post numbers so that they are clearly visible from the road either on a pole, sign or post. If your house is across the street from a mailbox, post the number along the driveway.
- Has your address been updated to include a drive/lane name? The County will be responsible for the driveway/lane sign and install. If the driveway leads to more than one address, post the correct number on each building. All in all – if your mailbox, lane, driveway is not clearly associated with a visible home, mark the end of the lane.
- Some people may believe posting the drive/lane name is an invasion of privacy. Posting the name will only help emergency responders find you when you need them. If you want to keep

unwanted drivers out of your lane, it is your right to post a sign declaring the drive is private and through traffic is not encouraged.

- Bollinger County has had instances of road sign theft. This is not merely a prank; this is dangerous as it can delay emergency response. Please do your part to reinforce signs on your property, and report any suspicious activity to the Sheriff's Department.
- Uncover the numbers. Several times per year, trim the bushes, vines, flowers and weeds so all numbers are clearly visible. Move flower baskets, flags and other items that may obstruct a clear view.

Please help protect your family and your property. If you need 9-1-1 services - fire, law enforcement and EMS will be able to find you faster when they can easily locate your residence. Seconds count in an emergency!