How Can We Find You ?

Every minute counts in an emergency. Being prepared to receive emergency assistance will dramatically improve public-safety response. 9-1-1 technologies assist call-takers at locating you when you dial, but taking a few extra moments and providing details to help verify your location is essential to assure the closest appropriate resources are dispatched. Consider the suggestions below to maximize a successful response in emergency situations:

Calling 9-1-1 From Where You Live & Work

Is the STREET & ADDRESS accurate?

To find you, modern 911 systems maintain geographical databases of street names and addresses that are assigned by your local municipality. 911 seeks to maintain close partnerships with local governments, to develop unique and understandable street names that may be clearly communicated to public-safety responders, as well as, numbering schemes that provide consistent sequential numbering ranges that will help us lead assistance to your door. In reality, confusing similarities creep in......

Are you living in a community sharing street names with neighboring areas? To illustrate, imagine how many streets in Berrien County has the names "Main, Lakeshore, or River." Does your street branch off of another sharing a common name only differentiated by a subtle, but important, directional prefix (N, S, E, W), or maybe a suffix name such as "Road, Avenue, Boulevard, Drive, Path, Court or Creek?" Relaying these details accurately in desperate situations is often overlooked, requiring further verification by the call-taker to avoid delays.

Address numbering for many streets begin at a given point and will expand in opposite directions, utilizing the same numbering ranges. Thus, the street is split into two sections that must be identified by a directional prefix (N, S, E, and W). For example, "1234 WEST Shawnee Road" would be in Baroda Township, and "1234 EAST Shawnee Road" would be in Oronoko Township.........there are many more.

Landline phone services assure addressing is consistent with data confirmed by local 911 Authorities before "turning-on" phone service. Digital Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services provide guidelines, and sometimes internet mapping tools, to assist customers in registering the 911 location they plan to use their broadband internet phone service. Take care when registering the address of your house, apartment or business, so that it is consistent with the official local assignment. Check with your local municipality if you are not sure. For further assistance, please contact the Berrien County-911 Data Center; they are glad to assist (269-983-3060 x4979).

Whether calling for yourself or a neighbor, think about the location information that would be most helpful to 911 call-takers.

1. Accurate street NAME including any directional prefix (N,S,E,W) and street TYPE name prefix (RD, ST, AVE, etc.),
2. Proper address numbers (if known) are best followed-up by;
3. Proximity to the nearest cross-street (e.g. "a half mile east of Main Street"), a prominent business name or landmark,
4. Community name (city, township or village),
5. Describe the structure where help is needed (main color followed by trim/roof).

Alert! Private roads, ride-of-ways not established and maintained by government, are not automatically registered into the 9-1-1 system. If you reside/operate a business on a private drive, be sure your local municipality is aware of its name and that the 9-1-1 Data Center has been notified. Named private drives should have a blue street sign with white letters, located where it accesses a public roadway.

Is your ADDRESS PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED?
(Call your local Fire Department. Many offer driveway signage services)
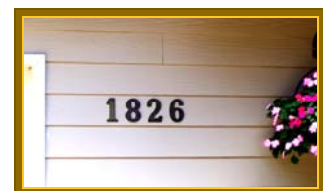
DRIVES

STRUCTURES

RULE OF THUMB

Place a street number sign at the entrance of the drive that will lead responders to your home or business, AND label the structure!

**CONTRASTING NUMBERS
3 INCHES MINIMUM**

**CONTRASTING NUMBERS
4 INCHES MINIMUM**

CALLING 9-1-1 WHEN OUT AND ABOUT

Similar guidance applies when traveling about and a street address is not known.

1. Accurate street NAME including any directional prefix (N,S,E,W) and street TYPE name prefix (RD, ST, AVE, etc.),
2. Proper address numbers (if known) are best followed-up by;
3. Proximity to the nearest cross-street (e.g. "a half mile east of Main Street"), a prominent business name or landmark,
4. Community name (city, township or village),
5. If necessary, describe the structure where help is needed (main color followed by trim/roof).

When traveling between 55-70 mph on highway, we pass through local jurisdictions in a short period of time. Being aware of the highway name, your direction of travel (eastbound, westbound, northbound, southbound), and accurately reporting the closest mile-marker (when available), will assist us in verifying your location.

Referencing nearby popular businesses, landmarks, along with the community name or interstate exits are also very helpful. Which "McDonald's, Rite Aid, Shell Station" did you say you are near? Is it the off I-94 "New Buffalo-Exit 1, Stevensville-Exit 23, Benton Harbor-Exit 28, or Coloma Exit 39," etc?

Lakes & Rivers

On or next to bodies of water, where cellular location technologies are available, the automated delivery of the latitude and longitude from your devise can assist a Public-Safety Dispatch Center triangulate your position in proximity to land. However, this may not always be the case. Many times, your call may get through, but identification of your location is not always assured. Being prepared to provide key information about your surroundings when calling for help can make a world of difference.

On or Near the Shore

When planning on swimming in Lake Michigan along the shores of Berrien County you should be aware of the occurrence of "rip currents." Certain conditions can produce strong undercurrents that push even the strongest of swimmers away from shore. Learn more on the subject and what to do when they occur at the National Weather Service link below. It could save a life!

http://www.crh.noaa.gov/iwx/?n=localripcurrentawareness

1. Making note of the common name of a public beach or riverside park, as well as the name of the community you are visiting is an important first step.

2. Be prepared to describe the location where rescuers are needed based on a structure or landmarks to get them the rest of the way.
3. In communities with more natural surroundings and less development, there are still a number of private beaches which have common names that would assist dispatchers in locating you. Some communities have "Beach Markers" installed to allow visitors to convey their exact location. Illustrated below is a typical marker in Chikaming Township, located every tenth of a mile.

Off Shore

When boating and swimming off-shore on Lake Michigan, the best way to summon help is by using a "Marine" radio, tuned to "Channel 16" (156.800 MHz).   When in distress, begin calling "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY," followed by "this is *vessel name and description*, the location (GPS coordinates are best, or distance from a landmark on-shore)," and advising the situation (e.g. sinking, man-overboard, collision, health emergency, etc.).

Another way is to dial 9-1-1 on your wireless phone. This is especially true on in-land lakes and rivers. Your signal may reach a close by cell-tower on land.   Since you are off-shore, getting a "fix" on your location with such technology is not assured. Be prepared to provide information as described above for radio distress messages.   The extent of success is contingent on your ability to provide your location, by GPS coordinates and/or description of and distance of landmarks on shore, and the rescuers ability to launch assistance from the nearest access point.

Be Aware of your Surroundings