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2015
**EXCELLENCE IN
INNOVATION**
Awards Program

recognizes the

Rutherford County EMS

for development and implementation of the

**911 Cell Phone Public
Awareness Campaign**

Team Members:

**Kerry Giles, Tammy Aldridge,
and Sheriff Chris Francis**

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project Number	PIP-3
Title of Program	911 Cell Phone Public Awareness Campaign
Program Category	Public Information/Participation
Submission Date	6/5/2015 2:11:00 PM
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County Manager	Steve Garrison
Supervisor	Steve Garrison
Implementation Date	2/2014
FLSA Designation	Exempt
Project Team Members	Kerry Giles - Transportation Services Director Tammy Aldridge - Communications Center Director Sheriff Chris Francis

Description of Productivity Improvement

This program focuses on productivity within the 911 Communications Center and the ability for EMS to respond to the right emergency at the right location. The County is responsible for providing emergency services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. This affects EMS, the 911 Center and the Sheriff's office. The public awareness campaign could make seconds count when a citizen calls in an emergency.

The key success of this program in meeting its objectives has been widespread distribution of the flyer and poster. This has been measured by the number of organizations that have partnered with Rutherford County government on this endeavor.

The 911 Communication Center monitors the number of cell phone users that call 911. According to NENA (National Emergency Number Association) for 2013, the national average of all 911 calls received from cellular phones is 75%. The 911 Communication Center can also run reports on the number of calls that are transferred to another county's 911 Center. In 2013, the Rutherford County 911 Center received 44,847 emergency calls and transferred 472 of them to another county.

It does not matter if someone is in California, Montana or New York. Cell phone use continues to grow rapidly and this issue will only increase if the public does not realize the impact a cell phone has on calling 911. This issue is quick and an easy way to inform the public which may result in saving lives. Seconds count in an emergency and getting to the correct 911 Center, as quickly as possible, allows emergency responders to get to an emergency sooner.

Description of why this project was initiated

On February 5, 2014, a citizen contacted Rutherford County Emergency Medical Services. The citizen was concerned that when they called 911 on February 1, 2014, EMS never arrived at their home. They had to drive a critical family member to the hospital themselves.

Upon investigation of the incident, the Rutherford County 911 Communications Center found the call had actually been placed to the Polk County 911 Communications Center. Polk is a bordering county to Rutherford. The citizen had used their cell phone to make the call and the signal went to a cell tower in the bordering county. The citizen called in three times before the dispatcher realized the call was coming from Rutherford County. This was due to the address that was given, being an exact address to one in Polk County. Polk County EMS had been dispatched immediately, but had gone to an address where there was no emergency.

The realization that this could occur numerous times to other citizens, prompted the County Manager to request EMS, 911 Communications Center and the Sheriff's Department to work together to build a Public Awareness Campaign. This campaign would inform the citizens of the importance to identify their county when calling 911 on a cell phone.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

There was a quick desire to roll out the Public Awareness Campaign as soon as possible. Key objectives were to create an information piece that was clear and concise and could be distributed easily. EMS, 911 and the Sheriff's office brainstormed ways to inform the public through different partnerships, contacts and social media.

Distribution of the flyer included:

- Schools (public, charter, private)
- Rutherford County government employees
- City managers and their employees
- Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce
- Rutherford Regional Healthcare System
- Isothermal Community College
- Media Contacts (regional and local newspapers, radio and television)
- Libraries --10 throughout the county
- Post Offices
- County departmental Facebook pages
- Community Health Council members
- Interview on WCAB local radio
- Email distribution through Sheriff's law enforcement network
- Participation and approval by the citizen who first identified the issue on February 5, 2014

The time frame for the development and implementation of the public awareness campaign was three months. The month of February 2014 was spent developing the program and the months of March and April 2014 were used to implement the program, distribute flyers and contact media outlets.

The development timeline is as follows:

- February 5, 2014 --Citizen emails EMS with concern
- February 6, 2014--911 Communication Center pulls the recordings from Polk County 911 and learns the citizen had contacted the wrong county through using her cell phone.
- February 7, 2014--Management from 911 and EMS inform the County Manager of this issue and the County Manager informs Commissioners. This is the start to the initial stages of the public awareness campaign
- February 21, 2014-- a county employee develops a flyer and poster to be used for distribution
- February 28, 2014--the flyer is distributed electronically to all local schools, Isothermal Community College, Rutherford Regional Health system, all county government employees, all town managers, the local chamber of commerce, and media contacts.
- March 3, 2014--County staff present the new campaign at the County Commissioner's Meeting. WSPA television out of Spartanburg, SC conducted and aired an interview with the Rutherford County 911 Director. <http://www.wspa.com/story/24874865/cell-phones-pose-challenges-for-911-dispatchers#.UxUWUox9cGw.facebook>
- April 2, 2014-- an interview is scheduled with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners to talk with EMS and 911 on this critical public awareness campaign. The topic is applicable to all counties not just North Carolina but nationwide.
- Week of April 7-11, 2014 flyers were sent home with all elementary age students. Posters were hung at public places such as the community college, government offices, small businesses, restaurants, medical offices / hospital, post offices, etc.

Cost was only \$500 to implement this campaign. Cost was solely for the printing of posters and flyers for distribution. Graphic design was done in house. Rutherford County is more than willing to share their marketing materials so that other counties can duplicate this effort. In fact, since starting the campaign several counties in North Carolina and South Carolina have picked up the campaign and are using it in their communities as well.

Other descriptive information

A link to the marketing flyer and EMS' Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/RCEMS/photos/pb.410025039117802.-2207520000.1433527719./510922752361363/?type=3&theater>

It is important to note that this is not a one-time event. While the initial launch only spans a few months, the information will continue to be pushed on an ongoing basis. County Facebook pages will update information, repost data, and keep citizens informed on this issue especially during peak travel and tourism times.

Also, during our current economic downturn, more individuals have cancelled their landline and are relying on their cell phone in order to reduce their monthly telephone bills. While a landline will tell a 911 dispatcher exactly where the call is standing, a cell phone does not. There is also a false sense of security with a cell phone. Television portrays the ability to locate a person from their cell phone immediately. While this may be true in some cities, it is not in a rural community like Rutherford County. Many citizens believe that 911 can pinpoint their exact location immediately from their cell phone.