

9-1-1 system brings non-emergency calls and pranks, hangups

By Susan Mahoney
staff writer

Despite hang ups, a few pranks and people calling 9-1-1 when it's not really an emergency, the new Oakland Countywide telephone emergency system has worked well during its first week, local police agree.

Sgt. Mike Madigan of West Bloomfield said the system is working "fine." But people still are calling and hanging up without letting dispatchers know they are not in a life-threatening situation.

"Say something to the dispatcher — say, sorry," he said.

When people hang up without informing the dispatcher that they are not in need of help, their address appears on a computerized screen and

a car has to be sent out, he said. Some people also are confusing emergency and non-emergency situations, he said.

If a family returns home from a two-week vacation to find their house has been robbed they should not call 9-1-1, Madigan said. Rather, they should call the non-emergency number because the crime is not in progress.

BEVERLY HILLS Public Safety Capt. Jim Davis said except for a few prank phone calls from high school pay phones, the system is working well.

"We have had full cooperation from people," he said.

Birmingham police Lt. Richard Patterson said the emergency telephone system is running smoothly.

"The number of test calls were a lot less than anticipated," he said. Patterson said he was expecting about 700 calls on Nov. 14 — the first day 9-1-1 went into effect — but only 75 calls were made.

Although it's likely there were more, Patterson said he knows of three emergency 9-1-1 calls last week — a heart attack, a suicide attempt and a personal injury.

Franklin police Chief Edward Giomb said they are not experiencing any abusive behavior with the number. But a few people are having trouble determining a "true emergency" from incidents like vandalism, he said.

However, the system's problems are minimal when one considers its value, he said.



Birmingham police/fire/EMS dispatcher Linda Christy mans the new emergency phone system.

STEVEN CAMTRELL/staff photographer

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