

PRESS RELEASE

CARO EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

As a result of a \$50,000 grant authored through the office of State Senator James Barcia and administered by the Village of Caro, local residents will now have the benefit of being notified in case of emergency. This is a role reversal where local authorities will be alerting citizens via telephone to urgent situations as they are developing rather than the public using 911 to notify emergency responders of a crisis.

The impetus behind the grant was the high profile incidents involving walk a ways from the Caro Center and prisoner escapes from Camp Tuscola. The need for an emergency notification system (ENS) was identified and a group of stakeholders convened to find a solution to the problem of adequately alerting the public to these events. Representatives from the Caro Center, Department of Corrections, Tuscola County Central Dispatch and Village of Caro Police Department were tasked with implementing an ENS.

The group identified a geographical area most affected by these incidents and determined that the boundaries of the Caro Fire District would encompass the primary locations, the Caro Center and Camp Tuscola. Additionally, the Tuscola County Jail, Court House and the seats of both County and Village governments would be covered. This would expand the coverage of the ENS to include, but not limited to, jail escapes, road closures, hazardous waste spills, infrastructure failures (water/sewer emergencies) or other calamities.

As administrator of the grant, the Village of Caro has contracted with Emergency Communications Network, Inc., of Ormond Beach, Florida, for its "CodeRED" high-speed telephone emergency notification services. The contract provides the ENS service for the next four years. The CodeRED system gives authorities the ability to deliver pre-recorded emergency telephone notification/information messages to targeted areas or the entire Caro Fire District. Preliminary mapping of the area covered by the ENS shows that there are 3358 telephone lines already entered into the Code Red database to receive the emergency messages.

Sgt Dale Stevenson of the Caro Police Department cautions that such systems are only as good as the telephone database supporting them. "If your phone number is not in the database, you will not be called". The CodeRED system gives individuals and businesses the ability to add their own phone numbers directly to the system's telephone database.

To ensure no one is omitted, Sgt Stevenson urges all individuals and businesses to log onto the Village of Caro website, www.carovillage.net and follow the link to the "CodeRED Residential and Business Data Collection" page. Required information includes first and last name, street address (physical address, no P.O. boxes), city, state, zip code, primary phone number and additional phone numbers (optional).

No one should automatically assume his or her phone number is included, Stevenson said. All businesses should register, as well as all individuals who have unlisted phone numbers, who have changed their phone number or address within the last year, and who use a cellular phone as their primary home phone.

Stevenson explained that the "CodeRED system is a geographical based notification system, which means street addresses are needed to select which phone numbers will receive emergency notification calls in any given situation. The system works fine for cell phones too, but we have to have a street address" in the database.

Stevenson stated, "CodeRED gives those who want to be included an easy and secure method for doing so. The system also allows for people to opt out of the ENS as no one is required to receive the emergency messages. For individuals or businesses that lack internet access, sign up forms, or forms for opting out of the service, are available at the Village of Caro Municipal building or the Caro Police Department. Citizens would complete the forms and return them to the Village for entry into the CodeRed system.

The Village will be testing the Emergency Notification System on Tuesday, March 3, 2009. The ENS test call will be sent out at approximately 9:30am

An additional feature provided for by the grant is an opportunity to sign up and receive weather warnings directly from the National Weather Service. Citizens who opt into this service would receive weather warnings only, not weather watches. This would ensure that messages are sent only when severe weather is imminent. This is an "opt in" feature only as there is no automatic inclusion into the weather alert system. Citizens wishing to enroll in this service would sign up by accessing the CodeRed link via the Village of Caro website.