

# Montgomery County 911 continues to update technology to meet needs, growth

By JENNIFER SUMMER | Posted: Tuesday, January 8, 2013 6:56 pm

It can be a scary moment when someone has to make an emergency phone call to 911.

The Montgomery County 911 works to ensure all calls to 911 from residents in Montgomery County are routed to the appropriate emergency personnel and raising awareness about the important facts residents need to remember when they make an emergency call.

The Concerned Citizens of East Montgomery County kicked off their first meeting of the year with a presentation from Executive Director of Montgomery County 911, Chip VanSteenberg, at their Jan. 7 meeting.

“About 240 million times a year somebody in America calls 911. In Montgomery County itself, it is about 200,000 calls a year that we process which breaks down to a call about every three to three-and-a-half minutes which usually all come at once,” VanSteenberg said at the meeting.

Montgomery County 911, whose official name is the Montgomery County Emergency Communication District, consolidates all of the back office functions of the 911 system. They are an independent governmental body and are one of 26 communication districts throughout the state of Texas.

In 1984, the Texas Legislature created “The Emergency Telephone Number Act”, thereby allowing individual counties to form 911 “districts” upon voter approval.

In November of 1985, the voters of Montgomery County approved by an 81 percent margin, the District formation and installation of Montgomery County 911.

They are funded through the 911 fees residents pay through their phone services.

“Montgomery County 911 is not the ones who answer the phones when a person calls 911. They have one consolidated 911 number residents throughout the county can dial and depending on where they are in the county, we route that call to either the Conroe Police Department or the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office and if need be dispatched to other entities from there,” VanSteenberg said.

Montgomery County 911 has operated on an enhanced system since 1988 which replaced more than 50 published seven-digit telephone numbers for police, fire and ambulance assistance.

In example, a county with two area codes, 35 phone prefixes and five different telephone companies, the end resulted in the ability for citizens to remember only three-digits from any area in the county to summon help which has reduced the amount of response time for those citizens in need.

“We serve as the official addressing agency of Montgomery County because we maintain the database of all of the addresses and the streets in the county. We also have a system where we can contact you in case of an emergency through our Code Red program,” VanSteenberg said.

In order to update technology and meet the needs of residents in the county, Montgomery County 911 is working to secure information and guidelines for the Next Generation Enhanced 911 SMS/MMS text solution which will benefit residents who have hearing loss or problems with hearing.

They are also encouraging residents who use their cell phone to call 911 to make sure they know their location, information about the problem and to stay on the line with the dispatcher.

Also, those residents with the Voice Over Internet Protocol and receive their phone services through an internet phone service like Vonage, they need to ensure their phone is registered to their current address so the emergency call will be sent to the correct responding agency.

“Technology is constantly changing and as result, we need to meet these changes to ensure our residents can get the help they need. The 911 system was built around landline telephone services so it needs to update to match all of the technology we have now,” VanSteenberg added.

For more information about Montgomery County 911, log on to [www.mc911.org](http://www.mc911.org) or call 936-523-5911.