

# Thousands of E-911 addresses to change

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BONNIE BATES / Staff Writer / Published Tuesday, August 14, 2007 1:03 am

WISE — In the next few months, 5,000 of the county's 20,000 households and businesses will find out that they have to change their addresses to conform with 911 emergency dispatch upgrades.

The addresses must change in order to use new Enhanced 911 technology that lets dispatchers see the location of a 911 emergency call on a digital map the moment the call comes through.

Businesses and homes will receive notification of their new addresses as soon as this winter, according to Virginia Information Technologies Agency public safety communications regional coordinator L. V. "Pokey" Harris.

Harris and officials from the county's geographic information sciences department explained the planned changes to Wise town planner Laura Mullins, Coeburn Town Manager Loretta Mays and Pound Town Manager Bobby Dorton during a Monday morning meeting at the Wise courthouse.

Representatives from each town were invited to attend.

## Specifics

"Seconds count in medical emergencies. Seconds definitely count in house fires," Harris said.

The goal is to configure the county's E-911 system so that when someone calls 911, the address automatically shows up on a dispatcher's screen, she explained. In order for that to work, every structure needs to have a unique address.

Some 911 addresses in the county are already set up for automatic identification, Harris said. At the addresses which aren't correct, the caller must tell dispatchers the address.

If your current business or residential 911 address includes a letter as well as numbers, that address is one that will have to change, geographic information officer Jessica Swinney explained. Your road name will also change, she said.

Also, she said, mobile home parks that have more than three mobile homes on a road will get road names. This process will do away with lot numbers and supply mobile homes with 911 numbers, Swinney said.

Once the new 911 addresses are in place, software in the county's dispatch center will automatically map the address, Swinney said.

The county's GIS office has compiled a list of frequently asked questions about 911 addressing changes that will be available to the public, according to Swinney.

### **Time frame**

It has not been determined exactly when people and businesses will be notified of the address changes.

The changes must first go through local post offices, Swinney said. Post offices will tentatively accept delivery of the data in October, she said.

The proposed changes will be sent to post offices in a specific order. Appalachia will be sent first, followed by Norton, St. Paul, Pound, Coeburn, Wise and finally Big Stone Gap, Swinney said.

Post offices are allowed up to six months to process the new addresses, Harris said. Notifications of address changes will be sent out after post offices process them.

Then, the telephone company will receive the addresses and has an additional six months to process them, she said.

Once the new addresses have been issued, home and business owners have one year before they have to start using the addresses for mailing purposes, Harris said.