

911 dispatchers need to give their location

Emergency service in rural America gets better all the time. New computers and global positioning equipment can track calls and pinpoint an accident site. Ambulances are better equipped and crews better trained than ever. Hospitals are more prepared for emergency cases as air ambulances rush victims to city trauma centers. The national 911 system integrates response and saves lives. There's one little detail that's often overlooked, though, a flaw that could be easily fixed. The dispatch system still relies largely on local county dispatch offices. Dispatchers in hundreds of locations across the country take 911 calls and route them quickly and efficiently. Most have not really adjusted to the era of cell phones, however. Most still answer the phone with something like, "911 emergency." That's fine if the caller is right there in town. It's not so great when you're out on the highway and have no idea who you are talking to.

At thousands of points across the nation, a cell-phone call might be routed to as many as a dozen different towers. On any given day, a call from the same hill might go to one county dispatcher one time and another county the next.

Callers simply can't tell what dispatcher they will get, and most aren't thinking clearly enough to ask.

One night this spring, a group from Texas wrecked a car a few miles south of the Nebraska line. A local man pulled up and asked if everyone was all right. Some were hurt, none seriously.

"Have you called for help?" he asked. "Yes." He called the county emergency center just in case. Sure enough, the dispatcher had no idea there was a wreck just north of town. He called a deputy from home and sent an ambulance.

While it seemed to take forever, the deputy, ruffled hair, wrinkled pants and all, arrived a few minutes later. He was followed closely by the ambulance, manned by volunteers also roused from bed.

Five minutes later, a sheriff's deputy and a fleet of fire trucks from Nebraska roared up to the scene in a blaze of red and blue.

The original call had gone to a Nebraska dispatcher. He had sent his troops, not knowing the wreck was well into Kansas. Not finding anything in their state, they kept going — to their everlasting credit.

The whole thing might have been avoided had the dispatcher been trained to identify his location to callers. That's not the case in most counties today.

When you call 911 from a mobile phone, you have to ask the dispatcher where he or she is and what county will respond. Dispatchers are trained to probe and find out where an accident or fire is, of course, but it doesn't always work.

Someday, the new satellite technology may make all this past tense, but it could never hurt for dispatchers to identify their location. It could only help.

And it might save a few lives.

— Steve Haynes

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and daytime phone number of the author.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

The longer the letter, the less readership it invites. Keep it within reason. If you can't say it within 550 words, then your letter is going to be too long and won't be used.

Letter can be faxed (877-3732), mailed to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654, e-mailed to tomd@nwkans.com, or brought to the office.

Share your thoughts with a letter.

**Don't forget:
Friday is 'Thumbs Up...' day**

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Office hours:
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ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

Incorporating the Norton County Champion

Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



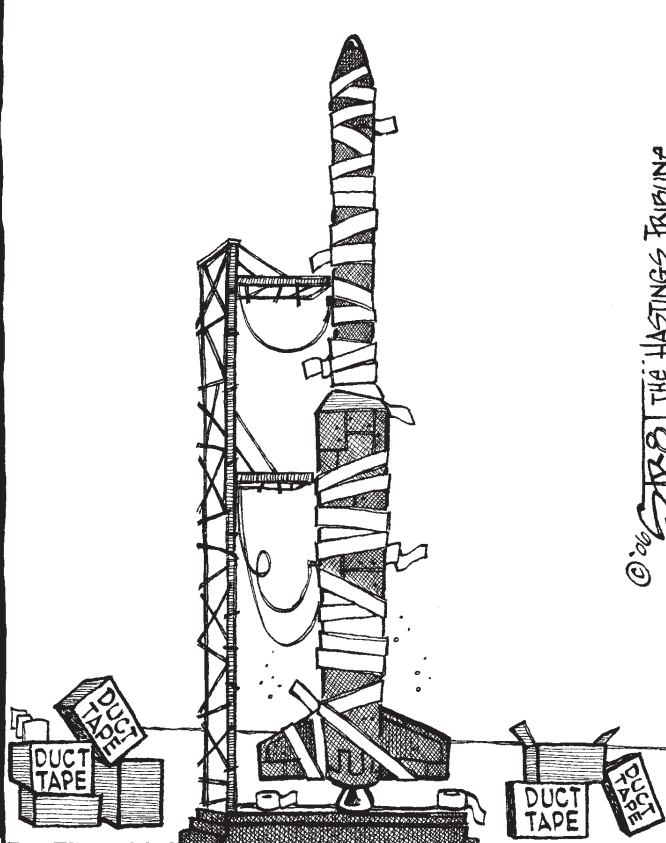
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Keeping up with grandchild a real chore

Short of hanging a notepad and pencil around my neck to jot down things Taylor says, I'll never remember everything. I just know that when I was seven I never said, "G'ma, I'm thirsty. I think I'm getting dehydrated."

Or, when I got after her for dawdling over her breakfast she said, "I'm sorry. I just got distracted by the TV."

We set a pretty fast pace, so there's no time for writing myself notes. Taylor notices it, too. She said, "So, G'ma, what's my schedule this week?"

I tried to do the first week "by the seat of my pants," finding someone to keep her each day. When a young mother of three, said, "Oh, don't you have a calendar?" I realized I needed to get organized.

She showed me the planning calendar she keeps for her family's activities. With the precision of a general moving his army, this mother had every camp, every activity, every day charted for every child. And, yet she made it look effortless with plenty of free time, too.

The lightbulb went off. I went on-line

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



and printed off a blank calendar. I've planned ahead and now, I "pencil in" her schedule.

Taylor knows (and so do I) where she's supposed to be each day. We still have a few "open slots," but they're filling up fast.

-ob-

One of the things I hope happens while I have Taylor this month is for her parents to have some special time for themselves. It might have come too late, though. Taylor's mother, Kara, said it was the second night Taylor was gone and she asked her husband, Adam, "What do you want to do?"

"I don't know. What do you want to do?" he answered.

She said, "I don't know. Whatever you want to do."

He said, "Taylor's not here to play with. I don't know what to do."

Yes, I think they needed a break.

This is my advice to young parents: Make sure you have a life apart from your children.

If you plan it right, they will be outside your home a lot longer than they will be in it.

-ob-

We had a long phone visit with Jennifer, our daughter in San Antonio, who is having a baby very soon. The due date is less than two weeks away and Jennifer is so ready to not be pregnant anymore.

She said everything is ready for little Aniston. The bedding is washed and her "come home from the hospital" outfit is laid out. I hope Jennifer remembered to pack her own bag.

Time is running out. I need to hurry up and get those receiving blankets finished.

Wichita among top 100 sweatiest cities

I think I have found the reason I am not overly fond of Wichita. It's not that I dislike the place, it's just that there's something about Wichita that drives me to choose other locations to knock around in. That all said, Old Spice has released the results of its Fifth Annual Top-100 Sweatiest Cities List. Low and behold Wichita is on the roster.

The Air Capital is No. 40 and really that's not bad. Tulsa is No. 24. Oklahoma City is No. 31. Omaha is No. 41. Kansas City is No. 52. Denver is No. 87. Colorado Springs is No. 95. And the three least sweatiest cities are Spokane at No. 98, Seattle at No. 99 and San Francisco at No. 100.

Phoenix has retained its spot as the nation's No. 1 perspiration producer (it was No. 1 in 2005 and 2003). The average Phoenix resident loses 26 ounces per hour during a typical summer day, says Old Spice. In less than three hours, the residents of Phoenix collectively produce enough sweat to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Las Vegas remained at No. 2 and Tucson once again came in No. 3.

The Sweatiest Cities rankings are based on the amount of sweat a person of average height and weight would produce walking around for an hour in the average summer high temperatures for each city. Old Spice suggests drinking plenty of

water, at least 8-10 glasses per day; wearing lightweight clothing and avoid dark colors; drink fruit juices and sports beverages to replace lost minerals if you are taking part in a strenuous activity where you anticipate heavy perspiration; and of course (here's the commercial) using Old Spice antiperspirant/deodorant daily, such as Old Spice Red Zone, which reduces the flow of sweat by up to 85 percent.

I would also suggest that if you are going to Phoenix you might want to also take along a bunch of body sponges. And you might also want to check the water at the pool before you dive in.

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In case you did not know, our 2005 personalized vehicle license plate was voted the best in the United States and Canada by the Automobile License Plate Collectors Association, Inc. This international, non-profit organization, founded in 1954,

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has about 3,000 current members from 50 states and 19 countries. The plate has proven very popular with the collectors due to its distinctive design, featuring a buffalo and the slogan, "Home on the Range." This is the third time Kansas has received this award, the others were in 1980 and 1994.

-td-

Only in America.....do we use the word 'politics' to describe the process so well: 'Poli' in Latin meaning 'many' and 'tics' meaning 'bloodsucking creatures'.

-td-

Why is "abbreviated" such a long word?

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains? If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavor, and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons?

-td-

I noticed on television Sunday night where Nancy Grace is still trying Michael Jackson.

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Don't forget to submit a name or names for Friday's "Thumbs Up" column. E-mail tomd@nwkans.com, call 877-6908, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654, so drop by the office. Thanks!

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Have a good evening!

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