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Thursday, March 22, 2007

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Local

Do You Know About 211?

by Kelli Cheatham (kcheatham@wsbt.com)

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(WSBT) Friday wrapped up the end of Severe Weather Awareness Week. It is now that time of year when we have to be on the lookout for all kinds of weather. In the next month or so we could see anything from an ice storm to a major tornado outbreak. But did you know there is a number you can call for non-life-threatening emergencies?

Emergency dispatchers often become overloaded when there is severe weather. St.

Joseph County dispatchers say they often receive dozens of 911 calls when there is severe weather...many of which are not true emergencies.

The Assistant Director of St. Joseph County Fire Dispatch, Nancy Lockhart, told WSBT News people call requesting non-emergency information from where a tornado is headed to whether or not roads are too icy to drive. Lockhart said weather disasters like the Crumstown tornadoes six years ago really put a strain on their system.

"The first two hours of the Crumstown tornadoes, we got approximately 200 calls in on our 911 lines, so we were completely overloaded," said Lockhart. "We have procedures in place where we call in additional personnel, but we don't have the phone lines that handle 200 in-bound calls."

Lockhart also said you should only dial 911 if there is an immediate threat to life or property, such as a fire or flood.

One thing you might not know... there is a non-emergency number you can dial during a weather disaster or other non-life-threatening emergency. The number - 211 - was activated in Northern Indiana in early 2005.

It's a National Referral Network, run by United Way. In a major disaster, some Emergency Management Agencies in this area can activate 211's services if they get overloaded. However, you can dial 211 anytime, for any reason, to get

Today's Forecast

High: 65
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Thunderstorms



What's On Tonight

ncaa tournament	7.00
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assistance or information.

Some services offered by 211 are health and human services referrals like where to find housing or financial health. They can even guide people in the right direction toward finding family members after a disaster.

The number can be dialed from any cell phone or land line. For more information, visit the Indiana 211 website.

For more information, visit [Indiana 211 website](#).

Story Created: Mar 9, 2007 at 6:54 AM EST

Story Updated: Mar 9, 2007 at 7:32 PM EST

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WSBT Question Of The Day

Should women have to see ultrasound pictures before getting an abortion?

Yes

No

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