

# GPS should speed EMS response

## System shows exact ambulance locations

BY JESSIE HALLADAY • JHALLADAY@COURIER-JOURNAL.COM • JUNE 5, 2009

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Ambulance response times should get shorter now that a new global-positioning system has been put in place, making it easier for Louisville metro emergency dispatchers to send the closest ambulance to a medical emergency.

After a year of planning and testing, the automatic vehicle-location system is operating, allowing dispatchers at MetroSafe Communications to see, in real time, the location of every vehicle used by paramedics or emergency medical technicians.

The system uses GPS technology that has been placed in every ambulance and paramedic fly-car to determine what available unit is closest to a medical call being phoned in to the 911 center.

"We're trying to make things faster," said Dr. Neal Richmond, head of Metro EMS. "But not just get there fast, but get there smart."

Previously, medical personnel had to call in their ambulance locations. But that only provided a best estimate of where an ambulance might be at any given moment.

This system eliminates the guesswork, Richmond said.

Dispatchers now can see icons on their computer screens that show ambulances or fly-cars within 10 feet of their actual location. They can see if the vehicles are traveling on an interstate or stationed at their prescribed headquarters.

The computer updates the locations every six seconds.

Because of that accuracy, that could shave seconds, or even minutes, from response time, officials said.

City officials invested \$435,000 in the system, which was paid for in a capital allocation to EMS.

Richmond said that is about the same cost as putting another ambulance in the system, but this way, response times improve across the board.

Louisville is the first community in Kentucky, and among the first large systems in the country, to use this system.

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