



December 27, 2009

Sign up for emergency alerts

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When there's an emergency or other immediate public safety concern, people typically depend on media broadcasts for notification.

But if you aren't watching TV, listening to the radio or on a news media Web site, you just might miss it.

That's all changing, thanks to a new service from Oakland County and its sheriff's office.

Recently, a Community Alerts program was begun, which sends E-mail and cell phone text messages to registered users, prompting them to check the county's Web site for street closures, crime sprees, hazardous situations or other emergencies posted by the OCSO.

"It's available and it's free. The only cost to consumers would be the text message fee if their cell phone carrier charges it," said Lt. David Pement, commander of the OCSO Highland substation.

Available to anyone who signs up, the Community Alerts program is part of the county's E-mail subscriber service which was launched in June 2008 and features dozens of county departments and municipalities offering information and alerts. The alert categories with the more pressing information are wireless enabled as well so they can be sent as text messages to cell phones.

The sheriff's office got on board with the program a few weeks ago and already is attracting a steady number of subscribers, said Sandy Jurek, program manager for the project.

"Public safety alerts are hugely popular," Jurek said, "There's general information as well as emergency notification where people can hear about road closures, missing persons, chemical hazards and that kind of thing. It's improved communication with the community."
