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Sussex County EOC asks mobile telephone users to register their numbers

Contact information needed for "reverse 911" system

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **1500 Hours, Friday Jan. 11, 2008**

Mobile telephones make life easier for millions of on-the-go Americans. In fact, nearly 13 percent of U.S. households use cell phones exclusively, abandoning the traditional telephone, according to industry statistics.

That convenience, however, can complicate the effectiveness of "reverse 911" systems, programs emergency managers use to notify residents of immediate hazards. "Reverse 911" systems can dial thousands of telephone numbers instantly to warn residents of chemical spills, evacuations or other hazards. But the systems rely largely on landline telephones, those usually found in homes and businesses.

The Sussex County Emergency Operations Center, along with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency, is encouraging residents who exclusively use mobile telephones to register their numbers in a statewide database that will be used for the Delaware Emergency Notification System.

"The idea here is to reach those residents who use their cell phone as their primary telephone," said EOC Director Joseph L. Thomas. "The traditional home telephone has been replaced by wireless devices for many people. While that has given many Americans freedom and flexibility, it causes a potential communications gap for emergency managers."

"In an emergency, it's imperative that we be able to contact the public and advise them of a potentially hazardous situation, whether it's affecting the whole county, an entire community or just one neighborhood," Mr. Thomas said. "Communication is crucial."

To register your mobile telephone, call 1-866-484-3264. Or log on to www.firstcall.net/unlisted.htm.

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