

Supporters say 911 phone system saves lives

By Mary Carmen Cupito
Post Staff Reporter

It would cost each Greater Cincinnati about \$6.71 to install an emergency 911 telephone system here and add another 19 cents a month to operate it, according to Cincinnati Bell.

Overall, the system would cost \$4.1 million to install and \$117,712 a month to operate.

Bell based these estimates on a survey of about 100 communities in Hamilton, Clermont and Warren counties in Ohio and Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties in Kentucky, said Mary Anne Austin, a Bell account executive who presented these figures at a meeting on 911 at the Academy of Medicine Tuesday.

IN THE PROPOSED system, a person would dial 911 in emergencies instead of the seven-digit telephone number for the police, firefighters or ambulances. The call would be answered at one of 24 answering points, depending upon where the call came from.

At the answering point, the phone number and address of the caller and the name of the nearest fire, police and life squads would flash on a television screen. With the touch of a but-

ton, the operator would connect the call to the proper agency.

There don't have to be 24 answering points. It would be more efficient to have just eight, said Ms. Austin, but some communities said they wanted to have their own answering points.

WITH ONLY EIGHT, the costs would drop to \$5.88 per phone to install and 16 cents per phone a month to operate 911, she said.

Sam Britton, another Cincinnati Bell official, said the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio still must approve the system.

"We need enhanced 911," said Dr. William Gates, president elect of the Academy of Medicine. The Academy and the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce's Justice and Public Safety Committee are spearheading a campaign to install enhanced 911, a computerized system that allows there to be several answering points. They believe it will save lives.

A person may not know where they are or may be too ill to speak. The 911 system will automatically display the location of the caller and the nearest place of aid to the 911 operator, said Gates.

NO COINS WOULD BE needed to dial 911

What the 911 system would cost

County	Access lines	8 answering points		24 answering points	
		Per month	One time	Per month	One time
Hamilton	396,072	\$59,114	\$2,248,595	\$68,254	\$2,475,086
Butler	48,713	8278	301,743	9508	332,336
Clermont	52,595	8772	319,413	12,664	415,242
Boone (Ky.)	23,783	4771	165,383	4771	165,383
Kenton (Ky.)	58,611	9552	350,973	13,608	450,492
Campbell (Ky.)	34,460	6458	228,103	8907	288,569
Total	614,234	\$96,945	\$3,614,210	\$117,712	\$4,127,108
Per phone line		\$0.16	\$5.88	\$0.19	\$6.72

from dial-tone-first phones. And, most pay phones should be converted to dial-tone-first in 26 months, the time it would take to install 911, Ms. Austin said.

None of the communities surveyed by Bell have yet committed themselves to buying 911. Bell officials say they need at least 500,000 access lines (home, business or coin telephone lines)

before they will install the system.

Gates suggested that the 150 or so community representatives at the meeting set up steering committees to study the system and send three representatives to a Regional Advisory Committee. Gates said he hopes that committee, which will support the efforts of the local committees, will be ready to meet by January.

Emergency number beneficial, but cost is factor

By Nancy Berlier
Post Staff Reporter

Needing an easy-to-remember emergency telephone number makes a believer out of anyone.

That was Clermont County Commissioner Dale Romohr's reaction to a meeting in Cincinnati Tuesday concerning a proposed 911 system for the Cincinnati area.

As an individual, Romohr said he supports the 911 emergency system because he needed it on Oct. 14, 1980, when he had a heart attack alone in his Union Township home.

"I DIDN'T HAVE the (emergency dispatch) number handy," Romohr said. "In my case, it was almost like someone had a pillow over my face. I couldn't breath."

Romohr dialed the only telephone number he could remember, that of his girlfriend (now his wife), and asked her to summon help.

"I barely made it back to the bed and collapsed," Romohr said.

However, Hamilton County Administrator Michael Maloney had a heart attack the same year at the Terrace Park Country Club golf course

and had no problem reaching help through a regular dispatch telephone number in the clubhouse.

"I WAS STANDING on the 13th tee when I had the heart attack and was put in a golf cart," he said. Someone called for help from the clubhouse and a policeman, who arrived within minutes, began administering oxygen, Maloney said. "The life squad arrived right on his heels."

There's no doubt that a 911 emergency number could be beneficial, Maloney said, but Cincinnati Bell may not have considered hidden costs, such as expanding Hamilton County's

dispatching and computer crime information systems after the use of those systems increases because of the 911 emergency number.

"I don't like to make cost a factor, particularly when you're talking about life saving implementations, but as a realist, there's only so many dollars—and you have to look at costs," Maloney said.

ROMOHR AND Cincinnati Mayor David Mann said they would like to be part of a steering committee proposed to consider 911, although both questioned whether government could bear the costs.

Maloney said he would suggest Hamilton County commissioners get more information about the proposal before committing themselves to the study committee.

Aside from costs, one drawback to 911 may be not who the system serves, but who it doesn't serve. Warren County and adjoining counties in Indiana would be excluded from the system initially.

Middletown Fire Chief A. Victor Auvil said his town's units respond to emergencies in Warren County as well as Butler County.