

'911' fast, lifesaving. . . but not cheap

By Terry Boschert
Post Staff Reporter

Clermont County Commissioner Dale Romohr said he knows personally how valuable it would be to have the 911 emergency phone system. And, for that reason, he personally is in favor of it.

Romohr was in a "pretty strenuous" political campaign for commissioner in 1980. He woke at about 4:30 a.m. on an October day and said his entire body felt like it does "when your arm or leg goes to sleep. I also was struggling for air and it felt like someone was holding a pillow over my face."

He was living alone then and managed to get to the phone. He remembered a friend's number, called and asked for life squad assistance.

"IF I HAD THE 911 system, it would have been a breeze," said Romohr. "It's easy to remember three digits.

"I think the key to it is it affects your family and could be a life-saving matter," Romohr said. "A few minutes here and there makes a difference."

Like Romohr, most government officials in the area are for the emergency system but say communities couldn't afford it and wouldn't want to increase taxes to pay for it.

SEVERAL OFFICIALS said they hoped the cost could be added to phone bills of customers, because then the per-person fee would be minimal.

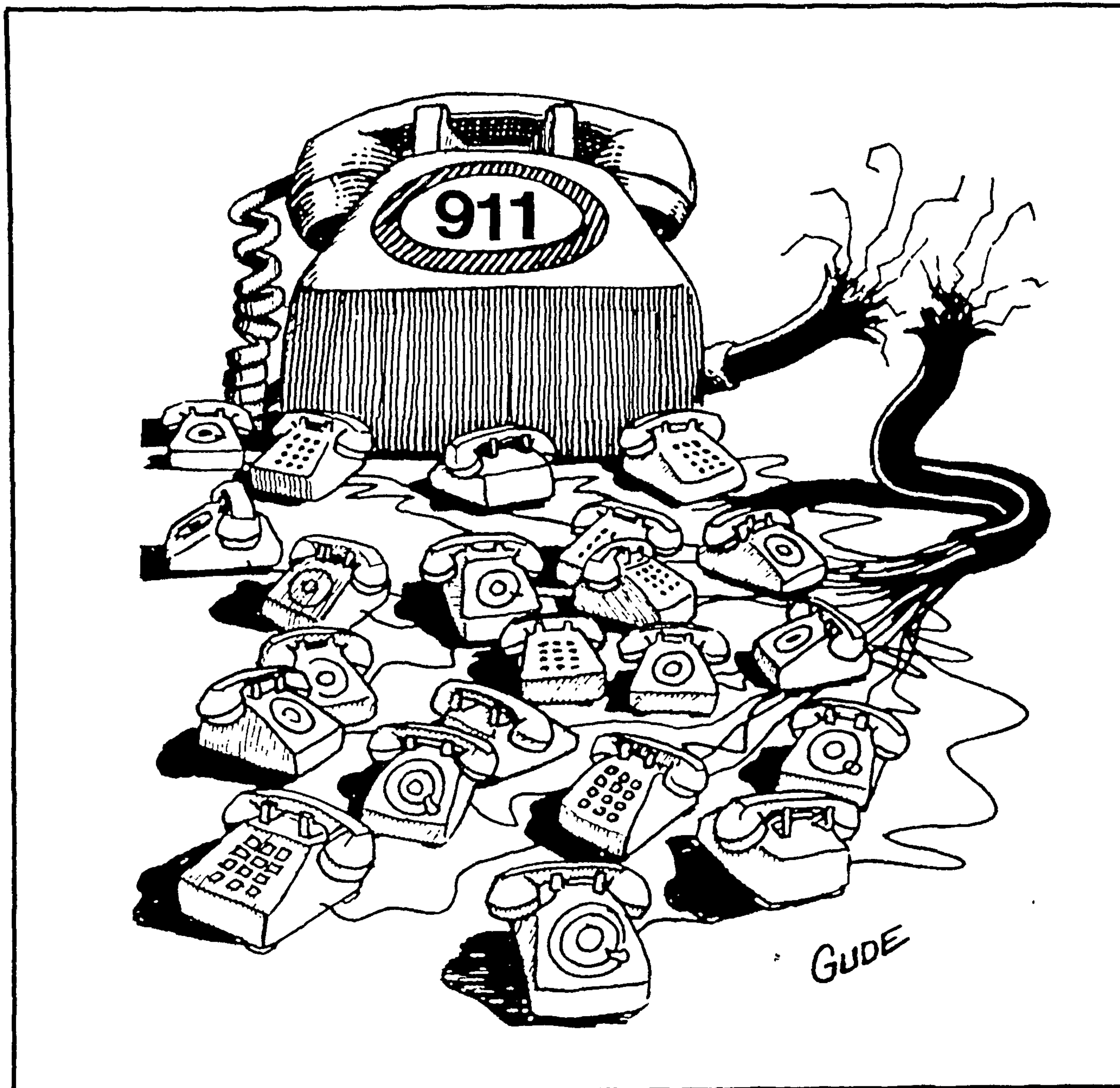
Mary Ann Austin, account executive for the 911 project for Cincinnati Bell, said efforts are being made to get the state legislature to approve a surcharge in Ohio so costs of the system could be added to phone bills of customers.

"Bell can't do it and that basically is what is holding the project up," she said

There would be a one-time charge for the cost of the installation of equipment, which would be spread over the 26 months of installation, she said. In addition, there would be a monthly service charge to customers of the six counties served by Cincinnati Bell where the service would be available.

THE TOTAL ONE-TIME and monthly charges, respectively, for the six counties are:

- Butler County — \$477,246 and \$13,346;
- Clermont County — \$319,413 and \$8872,
- Hamilton County — \$2,248,595 and \$59,114;
- Boone County, Ky. — \$165,383 and \$4771;



• Kenton County, Ky — \$350,973 and \$9552,
and

• Campbell County, Ky — \$228,103 and \$6548.

Mrs. Austin said Cincinnati Bell has about 74,000 customers in Butler County and 52,595 in Clermont. Ohio Bell serves the Middletown area and General Telephone the Oxford area. Mrs.

Austin said both companies are willing to participate

ACCORDING TO MRS. Austin, the one-time installation charge in Butler County would work out to \$6 48 per customer, an average of 25 cents over the 26-month period. She said the same charge in Clermont could would be \$6 07 per customer, or 23 cents over the period

Mrs. Austin said in Hamilton County the one-time charge would be \$5 68 per customer or 15 cents over the 26 months.

She explained the reason there is a difference in the costs is because of the number of public safety answering points a county has and the number of customers.

Mrs. Austin said the monthly charge would be about 18 cents in Butler County and 17 cents in Clermont County.

BUTLER AND HAMILTON counties each would have two answering points and Clermont one.

Jeff Landreth, Hamilton public safety director, said if the legislature adopts the surcharge statewide, then each community in the county probably would have a referendum in which voters would decide if they want to pay the costs

"Hamilton, at this time, could not afford to fund the system," said Landreth. Local officials also are opposed to increasing taxes for it, he said.

Mrs. Austin said an entire community could decide not to participate. However, she said if a community goes along with it all customers in the area would have to pay.

"IT'S LIKE SCHOOL taxes," she said. "People may not have children in school, but they have to pay the tax if it is approved."

Mrs. Austin said under the 911 system an operator at an answering point automatically would see on a screen the name, address and phone number of the person calling for assistance. The information would be programmed into a computer and the proper emergency agency would be notified immediately.

FAIRFIELD POLICE Chief Gary Rednour said, "I think it (911) is an excellent idea. It is more convenient and faster to the people. It also would cut down on false calls. The cost is the only negative thing about it because most municipalities couldn't afford to do it on their own . . ."

David Schul, assistant city manager at Middletown, said Ohio Bell is looking into how it can work with Cincinnati Bell to tie into its equipment. He said Middletown officials endorse the 911 concept.

Mrs. Austin said Warren County, which is served by United Telephone, is not being considered now for the service, although it could get it eventually.