

## **Know Your Location When You Call 9-1-1**

### **Local News**

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(Olympia) — The week of April 10 — 16, 2011 is National Telecommunicators Week, and Communications Officers of the Washington State Patrol ask that you do your best to know your location when calling 9-1-1.

Cell phone and wireline telephone technology aren't foolproof, and having a caller who can verbally describe their location can be a matter of life or death.

"It's heartbreaking to know that someone needs help and we don't know where to send it," said Mark Layhew, director of WSP's Communications Division. "It's about the worst kind of call a dispatcher can take."

Layhew urged drivers to pay attention to mile markers on state routes, or street names when on local roads. Drivers should do so routinely so that they already know their location if something bad happens.

"We frequently get calls from people who don't even know what road they're on, much less the nearest cross-street," Layhew said. "They're so upset and confused by whatever's happened that they can't figure out their location."

Dispatchers know the areas they serve, and can try to work with callers to pinpoint a location. Local landmarks, such as major businesses or billboards, can help. But the process takes time, and can delay the dispatch of emergency responders.

"We routinely tell people to carry emergency kits in their cars- bags with flashlights, blankets and extra water. Simply knowing your location has zero cost, and it's something every driver can do," Layhew said.

The Washington State Patrol is hiring Communications Officers. More information on WSP's Communications Division can be found at: <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/employment/communications.htm>

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9-1-1 DISPATCHERS, America's First Responders.