

Emergency workers: 'ICE' code in phones helpful

By KORIE WILKINS
Of The Oakland Press

Local emergency workers are urging residents to put their phones on ICE.

The movement to have the acronym ICE, which stands for In Case of Emergency, programmed into cell phones began in Great Britain.

Started by a paramedic who was frustrated by not being able to easily reach family members of unconscious or incapacitated patients, paramedic Bob Brotchie came up with the idea for ICE.

Waterford Township Fire Chief Dennis Storrs said paramedics in his department are starting to see the acronym popping up in cell phones in the community.

"I think it's a great idea," Storrs said.

"It's another form of identification."

Though local police and fire officials haven't seen many people with ICE programmed into their phones, they are encouraging residents to do that, and they are training officers, paramedics and firefighters to look for the designation.

Sgt. Todd Hasselbach of the Waterford Township Police Department heard of ICE from his father, Albert Hasselbach, and decided to spread the word.

"It's a neat idea for people to learn about," he said. "It can only lead to positive things."

It's generally not difficult to identify those injured or killed in communities like West Bloomfield Township or Troy, but the ICE designation is another useful tool for emergency workers, officials say.

"All of our paramedics are aware of it," said West Bloomfield Township Fire Department Capt. Joseph Slawek. "It's always helpful to have another contact. It's just one more thing that will help us provide the best care and possibly save a life."

Troy Police Lt. Gerry

Scherlinck said every little bit helps when police officers are trying to contact loved ones in an emergency.

"I don't think we've had a situation here where there was a significant delay in notifying family members, but you never know," he said.

"Anything that can assist us is good."

The ICE designation in cell phones started in Cambridge, England, in April.

The East Anglican Ambulance Service launched a campaign there, led by Brotchie, to encourage people

to designate contacts in their cell phones as "ICE," or in case of emergency contacts.

Local officials suggest designating three contacts, like ICE1-Mom, ICE2-Husband and ICE3-Sister.

The campaign took off after the London Underground

bombings in July, according to media reports, and crossed the Atlantic recently in a series of e-mail messages passed among friends and family.

Local officials say that, in an emergency or disaster situation, a quick check of a vic-

tim's cell phone could locate family members and possibly uncover medical conditions that could save a life.

Hasselbach said it's an easy thing to do and could be so helpful in a crisis.

"I'd like to see this really catch on," Hasselbach said.