Charleston County News Release

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Note to Media: *Charleston County EMS will be available for interviews and ride-along demonstrations on Friday, Feb. 23. Please contact the Public Information Office at (843) 958-4012 to schedule an interview.*

SEE GPS GRAPHICS: http://www.charlestoncounty.org/NewsImages/ems.html

Charleston County EMS First in State to Use High-Tech GPS Tool in Ambulances
New digital navigation program shortens response times, saves lives.

Charleston County Emergency Medial Services (EMS) is the first in South Carolina to use the new MARVLIS digital navigation program that allows crews to see live, Global Positioning System (GPS) maps in their ambulances.

The system shows the location of the 911 call, the ambulance's own location, and the most direct route to the emergency.

"As far as saving lives is concerned, this is, by far, technology at it's finest," said Don Lundy, Charleston County EMS Director. "A delay in emergency response time is mostly due to finding the location of the patient, and this system can dramatically reduce that time."

Previously, EMS crews used paper map books, which could be six months old or older when they were bought new at the store. The issue of finding a location in an emergency started from the very beginning of the call.

"The first two minutes are crucial to a response," Lundy said. "If you don't know which way to turn out of the station, you can't start the response. Before the new digital navigation system, the crew had to spend valuable time to look in a map book so they knew which way to go."

With the new system, crews can see almost immediately where the emergency is and how to get there. The system alerts them with a tone, and the location of the call appears with a large, red "X." It also shows the location of the ambulance on the map and the quickest route to the emergency.

"It is really fantastic to watch," Lundy said.

The new system uses Charleston County Global Information System (GIS) maps, which can be updated weekly by County Government staff.

"The County GIS team is incredible at fine-tuning the system," said Lundy, "and so is the County's Planning Department in making sure addresses are correct and current. They've even got some mobile home numbers on the maps, and that will definitely help save time and lives."

The system, which has been up and running since Dec. 7, 2006, was instrumental in one particular case of a cardiac arrest.

"The crew told me the system showed them a shorter route to the location of the emergency that they never would have known of if they had been using the old maps," Lundy said. "It shaved several minutes off of the response time."

The system was purchased for approximately $875,000. Lundy says it's worth every penny of it because he knows it will save lives.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for more information on Charleston County EMS, and for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.