

Reverse 9-1-1

System Features

Reverse 911 has a number of distinct advantages over other components of the warning system.

It can provide an initial warning as well as specific instructions to protect at-risk citizens. Both factors are necessary for an effective warning.

Reverse 911 can target specific geographic locations, warning only those people who are directly at risk.

The system uses existing devices (telephones) to alert citizens; there is no need for people to buy a specialized warning device.

The system can deliver text messages to TTY/TDD devices. This feature has the potential to greatly enhance our ability to warn and protect citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing.

System administrators can add telephone numbers to the database. This can be used to add unlisted telephone numbers and cell phone numbers to the system.

System Limitations

As with any component of the warning system, the Reverse 911 system has limitations. These can be minimized with diligent administration of the system, but they will always exist to some degree:

The telephone number database contains only the telephone numbers listed in the White Pages for Cherokee County. As a result, unless manually added to the database, Reverse 911 will not notify people with unlisted numbers or cell phones. To minimize this, CherokeeCounty has provided a form for residents to enter contact information for addition to the database.

Cell phone numbers are not included in the database. Cell phone numbers can be manually entered into the system either as part of a notification list or linked to a specific address. If linked to a specific address, the location of the cell phone number becomes essentially fixed to that location. This could lead to the situation of a cell phone being notified when the user is mobile and well out of the affected area. Or conversely, the situation where the user is mobile, is in the affected area, but is not notified because the fixed location of the number is in an unaffected area. Please consider this when registering cell phone information for addition to the database.

Reverse 911 is very effective for making notifications within a well-defined geographic area. Due to the outgoing call capacity of the system, the system becomes less effective as the geographic area gets larger. For this reason, the County takes a systematic approach to warning, recognizing that no single application can provide warning to all citizens in all situations. The Reverse 911 system is an excellent enhancement to our system, but it does not replace any of the other components.

How will the system be used?

The system could be useful for many purposes however, Cherokee County is reserving it exclusively for emergency or disaster notifications. Possible uses include:

Severe weather. Severe weather usually affects the entire County, or at least large areas of the County and is not typically an appropriate occasion for Reverse 911 activation. With one exception. The Department of Emergency Management is working with community groups to develop a list of County residents who are deaf or hard of hearing. The TTY/TDD capability of the system will be used to alert this list of Tornado Warnings issued for Cherokee County much in the same way the sirens are used to alert the hearing community. Register your TDD / TTY phone number and address with us on our Reverse 911 Sign-Up form.

Hazardous materials release. An airborne hazardous materials release or potential for a release where there is a need for residents to evacuate or shelter-in-place.

Community policing. Local police departments and the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department may use the system for a variety of community policing situations, such as missing children alerts or prisoner escape.

Public health alerts. Cherokee County public health departments may use the system to disseminate public health information such as boil water alerts or outbreak of infectious disease.