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A matter of life and death

Municipality concerned by number of residents not posting civic numbers

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CUMBERLAND COUNTY – It may seem farfetched, but whether or not you've got a civic address sign posted at the end of your driveway could be a matter of life and death.

"Worst case scenario: you don't have your sign at the end of the driveway, you're having a heart attack, you dial 911 and you can't talk (to give directions), they wouldn't be able to find you in time," said municipality of Cumberland County summer student Lindsay LeBlanc. "That extra 10 minutes it would take to find your house, that could be life-threatening.

"A lot of people don't realize how serious the nature of this is."

In June 2006, the municipality passed a bylaw stating everyone in the county must have a blue and white civic number sign, as distributed by the county. In a little over a year, only about 2,000 out of around 10,000 civic points have them.

It's been LeBlanc's job over the summer to try to promote the necessity of the signs.

She said a number on your house isn't good enough, as factors such as weather and darkness could cause emergency personnel to miss your home.

The numbers on the signs distributed by the county are big and bright enough to see in the daytime and they're reflective for easy visibility at night.

The signage is also critical in a case like a motor-vehicle accident when you're in an unfamiliar area where you can let 911 know your general location from nearby signs.

LeBlanc said the municipality isn't issuing any sort of penalty at this point, but wants residents to understand the significance of the signage.

Leicester Volunteer Fire Department chief Donald Read said his department went door-to-door in the area they cover taking orders for signs after the bylaw was passed. He said while signs are infrequent in many areas, about 90 per cent of properties in his area have them.

"It certainly speeds things up. You never know when you're going to be in an emergency," Read said. "It makes it nice for us."

For more information, contact the municipality at 667-2313.

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Municipality of Cumberland County summer student Lindsay LeBlanc displays a civic number sign for which the county passed a bylaw over a year ago requiring each resident in the county to have one at their driveway. The municipality feels so far the compliance rate isn't high enough.
Justin Dickie – Amherst Daily News