

SUPERVISOR'S COLUMN

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Collaboration, compliance are key to prompt emergency response

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None of us want to find ourselves in an emergency situation – but it's essential to prepare for the worst. From households to businesses to municipalities, we all should have a disaster plan in place.

We are now working on an update of the town's Emergency/Disaster Plan, which sets forth specific steps among our agencies in response to disaster. This year, we are incorporating new federal regulations in compliance with the National Incident Management System, or NIMS. An initiative of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), NIMS was developed to support responders from different jurisdictions, and to improve how state and local governments work together to respond to natural disasters and emergencies.

Mutual aid among towns and throughout the county is key, since disasters can impact a widespread area. In Monroe County, mutual aid has a long and successful history. The Town will soon enter into a revamped, county-wide communications framework called the Monroe County Public Safety Paging System. Equipped with text-messaging and other cutting-edge capabilities, this system will help coordinate the actions of police, fire and ambulance services throughout the County.

In the past years, we have conducted "table top drills" – realistic emergency scenarios that involve all of the town's emergency service providers (police, fire, ambulance, public works) and town officials who would be called upon in an emergency. We intend to conduct another drill this year.

The town's Public Safety Committee is devoted to furthering collaboration on day-to-day public safety matters and at critical times. This local initiative, established by me in 1992 and now led by Councilman Ray Tierney, provides a forum for the town's public safety service agencies and has improved communication, addressed issues and problems of joint concern, and fostered a closer and better working relationship among the various groups represented: Brighton's Police Department, Brighton Fire Department, West Brighton Fire Department, Brighton Volunteer Ambulance; and the town's Public Works, Highway and Sewer Departments. This means better public safety services to those who live and work in our community.

And of course, those who live and work in Brighton help strengthen our emergency response in many ways. Our volunteer ambulance drivers, firefighters and ham radio operators are an essential component of our emergency response.

As residents, you can help ensure prompt emergency response in the simplest of ways – starting with the front of your home! Statistics show that one in four homes and businesses in Brighton do not have properly-displayed numbers – despite the fact that state and local fire codes require it. This presents a problem to emergency responders trying to find that right address.

Compliance with the house-number ordinance is vital for emergency service agencies to locate your home. Every day, emergency service agencies waste valuable time searching for addresses. Brighton's emergency services have an excellent response rate, but “those extra two minutes is the difference between life and death,” says Brighton Fire Marshall Pat Inzer. Fires may be easy to spot, but in every emergency – especially cardiac arrest cases – each second is key.

Numbers must be a minimum of four inches high, in Arabic numerals or alphabet letters, plainly visible from the street and not blocked by foliage. Brass numbers are hard to see; we recommend a retro-reflective material, in a contrasting color to your home that shows up in the beam of a spotlight. Complying with this ordinance is an easy way for you to support our emergency response agencies. Remember: there's safety in numbers.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.