

# Butler, Warren 911 phone systems on hold

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The scenario is familiar to those who handle emergencies.

The police dispatcher's telephone rings, and in a voice laced with panic someone yells: "My house is on fire!" The caller hangs up — without giving the dispatcher a name or address.

Or, a small child calls a telephone operator and says, "My mommy is on the floor and she's hurt. Please help her." But the child doesn't know the address.

Those situations can be avoided with what is known as "911" service.

The Ohio legislature last week passed a bill which its sponsors say will encourage communities and local phone systems to invest in the equipment to make 911 possible. The bill awaits the signature of Gov. Richard Celeste.

"We're all very excited about it," says, Jerry Fenlon, Warren County Disaster Services Director.

With the most sophisticated 911 service, calls are received at a central location, where a computer immediately identifies the origin of the call and the address. A dispatcher who is in radio or phone contact with all county emergency units contacts the proper fire, police or life squad.

Because the system pinpoints the

origin of calls, it is expected to all but eliminate false alarms, according to Irene Lewis, Butler County civil defense director.

While 911 has the endorsement of most municipalities and county commissioners, officials in Butler and Warren counties caution that the system won't be implemented immediately. A two-year timetable probably is realistic, they say.

The reason is because of the need to coordinate planning among local governments and the telephone companies serving each county.

In Butler County, a steering committee accomplished much of the preliminary work in 1983 and is await-

ing word from a regional committee in Cincinnati before taking additional steps.

In Warren County, commissioners are awaiting Celeste's signature on the bill before establishing a planning committee, which would set up a technical advisory committee, according to Fenlon.

Each county is served by several telephone companies — three in Butler and six in Warren. That will complicate establishment of the system in each county but should not be a major stumbling block, according to Mrs. Lewis.

Telephone companies estimate that

the cost to maintain the 911 system will be about 25 cents per month for each customer.

The legislation provides a tax credit to cover the costs incurred by telephone companies in establishing 911 systems. However, local governments will have to bear the cost of setting up central receiving centers and providing dispatchers at the centers.

In Warren County a central communications center is being set up in the basement of the new county courthouse on East Street in Lebanon. The county also has invested in a microwave telephone system — a telephone company without telephone lines.