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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Help Us Find YOU**

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center (HRECC) is asking for help from the community!

HRECC is staffed with 45 employees and provides 24-hour emergency communications services to the citizens of Rockingham County, the City of Harrisonburg and all towns that fall within the County. Personnel of the HRECC answer 9-1-1 emergency calls, business line phone calls, and dispatch police, fire and emergency medical services responders.

Over the course of the last 10 years, wireless phones have continued to increase in usage and now represent more than 70% of the 9-1-1 calls received by the HRECC. When a citizen dials 9-1-1 from their landline phone, call takers are provided with information that can identify the location where the call is being placed. This is often vital information in an emergency event as callers are sometimes unable to provide the address, or they are in a situation that prohibits them from being able to speak and give that information to the call taker.

Wireless 9-1-1 calls from cell phones pose a unique situation because they do NOT provide the exact address of the caller. In these circumstances, the call taker is given a latitude and longitude from which to determine the location. Further, there is no name or response assignment provided.

The HRECC utilizes enhanced mapping services to assist in determining locations of wireless callers, however, they must rely heavily on the citizen to provide and confirm the exact location. Merely utilizing mapping data can sometimes put responders only in a general area and not at the exact location where help is needed.

Given this hurdle faced by the 9-1-1 industry nationwide, the HRECC is asking for assistance from the local community to, 'Help US Find YOU.'

When calling 9-1-1:

- Know your surroundings and be prepared to give the location where help is needed. The location is the most important part of the call gathering process. If a citizen is not familiar with the exact address they should be prepared to provide an intersection or possible landmark.
- Remain calm and be prepared to answer all of the questions posed by the call taker.
- Follow the instructions of the call taker and help will be sent to the location that you have provided.

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As technology continues to grow in our area, the 9-1-1 center will need the help of the community even more in this partnership for public safety.

Staff from the HRECC will be at the Valley Mall throughout today and tomorrow (April 19 and April 20) to promote public education in 9-1-1 and helping citizens to understand wireless phones and the 9-1-1 system. Please stop by the HRECC booth and pick up information about the services provided by HRECC.

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