

# Program puts emergency information at rescuers' fingertips

By Leon Fooksman | South Florida Sun-Sentinel June 8, 2008

Senior citizens are responding in greater numbers than families to a local law enforcement and fire-rescue initiative to get people to carry medical information cards and emergency contact phone numbers, coordinators said.

The intent of the program called "in case of emergency," or ICE, is for people to keep pertinent medical information and phone numbers for family members on them at all times so that police officers and paramedics can be more effective at helping the ill and victims of car crashes and violent crimes.

Much of the joint [Palm Beach County](#) Sheriff's Office and county fire-rescue effort is centered on getting out medical cards with information on blood type, allergies, prescription drugs and conditions.

More than 30,000 people have picked up the cards at sheriff's and fire stations, mostly in the western communities, since the initiative kicked off in January, said Deputy Karl Martin, who works in the Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit.

So many cards have been given out that organizers printed thousands more to keep up with demand, Martin said.

Martin and other organizers also decided to get authorities in [Boca Raton](#), [Delray Beach](#), [Boynton Beach](#), [Wellington](#) and other cities involved in passing out more cards.

Retirees living in condos and gated communities in south [Palm Beach County](#) have picked up most of the cards, prompting organizers to search for new ways to get them to other age groups, including school-age children.

"As a parent, you'd want to know right away that your child is OK if there's been an accident, as opposed to hearing about it on the news much later," Martin said.

Coordinators want to visit schools to discuss the benefits of carrying the cards and programming family contacts into cell phones, said Capt. Don DeLucia of Fire-Rescue. But school schedules are tight, and getting coordinators to speak with students is a challenge, he said.

"The curriculum doesn't leave much room to get this in," DeLucia said. Still, fire-rescue educators get the message to students by speaking to them at career days and health fairs.

"Everywhere we go, we give them out," said Gerri Penney, community education coordinator for fire-rescue.

The cards also come with ICE stickers for phones. Authorities want cell phone holders to punch in emergency contacts under the word ICE. For example, a wife wanting to make her husband an emergency contact on her phone can store his number under ICEHUSBAND.

That way, if the wife gets into an accident, officials at the scene could get her phone and be able to reach her husband much faster than searching for him through public records. The sticker lets rescuers know immediately that the phone has ICE contacts.

Martin said about 5,000 cards and stickers are available to be picked up at stations. He suspects more cards will be needed once authorities expand their campaign to other communities this fall.

Leon Fooksman can be reached at [lfooksman@sun-sentinel.com](mailto:lfooksman@sun-sentinel.com) or 561-243-6647.

## What is ICE?

The program is designed to get people to keep pertinent medical information and phone numbers on them at all times so police officers and paramedics can be more effective at helping the ill and victims of car crashes and violent crimes.