

911 - Where Is Your Emergency?

For years people have been taught that if they have an emergency or witness an emergency to call 911. Emergencies happen every day and if you are faced with an emergency situation and you call 911, you can rest assured that your call will be answered and help will be sent to you quickly. Union County is fortunate to have an advanced 911 Dispatch Center and dedicated dispatchers who are ready to answer your call at a moment's notice.

The 911 Dispatch Center provides a valuable service to the public and to the various organizations that are dispatched through the center. It is a direct contact between a person with an emergency and the public safety organization that can help. The 911 center is also the communication hub of all emergency services which includes emergency medical, fire, law enforcement and emergency management. The main purpose of the 911 Dispatch Center is to collect and disseminate information concerning emergency situations in Union County.

In 2017, Union County 911 Dispatch Center had a total of 43,599 incoming calls. Of those, 13,974 were 911 emergency calls that people were reporting an emergency. The other 29,625 were administrative and non-emergency calls made to the center. That is approximately 120 calls a day and that is just the incoming phone calls. 911 dispatchers must make hundreds of calls to other agencies and organizations during the shift. Dispatchers also communicate with public safety by radio and messaging. While all this is going on, the dispatcher is recording every action in the Computer Aided Dispatch or CAD.

Dispatchers must be able to think and react quickly. They calm excited or even frantic callers and dispatch the appropriate units to the emergency. They must multi-task by talking on the phone, talking on the radio, and typing everything into the CAD. They must also improvise based on the diverse and ever changing situations. They never know what may be the next incoming 911 call.

The 911 Dispatch Center is a valuable member of the public safety team of Union County. It provides a valuable service to both of its customers; the citizens and the public safety organizations. We are proud to have them as a team member.

Union County Fire Department - Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Adversity

A wealthy New Yorker becomes President, much to the surprise of his fellow Republicans. Many in the country express grief and fear. But none know his limitations more than himself. Ascending to the Presidency was his great adversity.

In his book, "The Man the Presidency Changed," Scott Greenberger documents the unlikely ascension of Chester Arthur. Despite being known as corrupt and deeply flawed, his party nominated Arthur as Vice President on the ticket with James Garfield in 1880. They won, but when Garfield was assassinated the next year, Arthur realized that his future presidency could not be like his past.

Julia Sand acted on the great angst that gripped the nation. She began to write letters to Arthur, including these lines: "Great emergencies awaken generous traits which have lain dormant half a life. If there is a spark of true nobility in you, now is the occasion to let it shine ... Reform!" He did. His work as an anti-corruption reformer and civil rights advocate earned many adversaries and cost him a second term. The presidency transformed him and for that he said, "My debt is to the Almighty."

You and I won't face the adversity that comes with high office, but we have our own. How do we respond, and how does it affect us? If ever a man could speak to adversity, the Biblical Job can. You know the story, how he endured the loss of everything.

Adversity didn't come his way because God was punishing him. In fact, he "was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil" (1:1). Sure, you can create your own adversity that pushes you to repentance. But when this fallen world just picks on you, God can still use it for good. Wait for it.

Job did not let his troubles cause him to doubt God. He went so far as to say, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15). When you know God is good and He loves you, you can trust that the adversity in your life is not meaningless. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas. 1:2).

Job protested a little much, so eventually the Lord responded by rolling out his extensive resume as Creator (ch. 40, 41).

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

This week's Q & A is about the flu (influenza). The information came from the Union County Health Department, Dr. Logan and Dave Palmer, the Public Information Officer, District 2 Public Health, 1280 Athens St., Gainesville, GA 30507. Thanks to them for getting the information to me. Also, some info is included from the internet.

Q. Do a lot of people in Union County have the flu?

A. Absolutely. I just want to remind our residents that influenza continues to affect a lot of people in Union County, across Georgia and the entire country. This year's flu virus can cause serious illness or even death if not treated properly.

Q. Is it too late to get a flu shot at the Union County Health Department?

A. If you haven't had the flu shot, please consider getting one now. Vaccines are available at the health department and many other providers around the county. Public health officials have acknowledged that this year's flu shot is not a perfect match for the H3N2 virus but can still reduce the effects from the virus if you get sick. The flu shot also protects against other strains of flu like H1N1 and Influenza B and is a good match for those types of flu. CDC reported that influenza activity could last until May.

Q. How do you usually contract the flu virus?

A. Flu viruses travel through the air in droplets when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes or talks. You can inhale the droplets directly, or you can pick up the germs from an object — such as a telephone or computer keyboard — and then transfer them to your eyes, nose or mouth. To avoid this, people should stay away from sick people and stay home if sick. It is also important to wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Q. When someone sneezes, how far can the germs travel?

A. Up to 20 feet if you do not cover your sneeze with your hand or preferably covering your mouth with your elbow or handkerchief to contain the germs. This practice is a good idea whether flu season or not.

Q. Is the flu highly contagious?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Non-DOT Drug Testing

In the most basic terms, a Non-DOT drug test is a drug test given to a worker in an industry that is not regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

There are two distinct worlds when it comes to drug testing. One realm applies to industries regulated by the DOT. If you fly a plane, drive a train or truck, or transport hazardous materials, you likely fall under the rules of the DOT when it comes to drug testing.

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

Otherwise, you are in a non-regulated industry. Testing done on employees in a non-regulated industry is referred to as Non-DOT drug testing. A Non-DOT drug test is essentially whatever the employer decides meets the company's needs and is codified in their company drug testing policy. The timing is up to the employer, as well as the type of testing. They could choose to test urine, oral fluid, hair, or a combination of the three after considering applicable legal regulations.

There are very few federal laws regarding Non-DOT drug testing, but there are state and local regulations, workers' compensation, and unemployment laws that could influence drug testing programs. Many of these rules are voluntary but following them could earn companies benefits like discounts on workers' compensation premiums. "Drugs Don't Work in Georgia" is one such program that offers significant insurance premium discounts.

What does a non-DOT drug test consist of? A non-DOT drug test is normally a minimum of a 12-drug panel and can be expanded up to 10 or 15 drugs. The 5-panel tests for marijuana, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines/methamphetamines, and phencyclidine (PCP).

A 10-panel drug test would add barbiturates, benzodiazepines, methadone, methaqualone, and propoxyphene to the list. Non-DOT employers can also choose to test for hallucinogens, anabolic steroids, ecstasy, and prescription pain-killers such as oxycodone and hydromorphone instead.

While the actual test is the same, different drug tests are defined by when the test takes place and the reason for the test.

Pre-Employment: Many companies now require all new hires to pass a drug test before starting work. It gives you the chance to keep habitual users out of your workforce.

Random: These tests may be done monthly, quarterly, or even annually depending on the company's needs. Names are generated randomly by a computer program. This type of testing is a huge deterrent since employees never know when their name will be called.

Post-Accident: These tests are usually done after accidents that cause a fatality or injury, property damage or could lead to a workers' compensation claim. It is essential to spell out the timing for these tests in your drug testing policy, so the tests can be done before the drugs can clear the employee's system.

Reasonable Suspicion: If you are going to utilize this type of test, you need to have supervisors who are trained to spot suspicious behaviors. They are only conducted if a company official can show reason to believe an employee might be under the influence.

Return to Duty: If you allow an employee to return to work after having a positive drug test result, it is a good idea to test them once more to make sure they are no longer using. This test might also be appropriate when an employee returns to work after an accident to be sure they are not impaired by prescription painkillers.

Follow-Up: If an employee is permitted to return to work after drug or alcohol treatment and passing a Return to Duty drug test, you might also want to consider Follow-Up testing over the next year to be sure he or she

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Letters to the Editor

It's My Home

Dear Editor,

Just imagine driving along a busy road and overtaking a man (no longer young) with a "trash grabber" in one hand and two five-gallon buckets in the other. He is busy picking up roadside litter that perverse, inconsiderate drivers from Towns and Union counties, North Carolina and Florida have thrown out of their vehicles. That man would be me!

For several years I have informally adopted a two-mile stretch of Gum Log Road between the fire station in Union County and the Many Forks Church in Towns County and now spend 2-3 hours every week walking part of that road picking up roadside litter. I am the 6th generation of my family to live in this valley. Although I took a 42-year absence for school, a military career and secondary employment, we built our dream home here and have been full-time residents again for more than 13 years. Desiring to be more than "just another set of wheels on the road", I began collecting litter and operating the Neighborhood Recycling Program in an effort to improve the appearance of our community.

Gum Log Road with its feeder roads is a busy highway with hundreds of passing vehicles every day. A sizeable fraction of those travelers

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Voting

Dear Editor,

I take voting very seriously. We have a vote coming up in May for the E-SPLOST.

We have lived here for over 20 years and love it. When we moved here, my husband was working and bringing in an income, we were not eligible for retirement or Social Security. We are now 71 and live on a small retirement and Social Security.

We pay our taxes like every person in Union County. We pay approximately \$560 for Union County property tax and \$1,035 for school tax. Isn't that enough for us? We also pay the County SPLOST and the E-SPLOST that was passed last time.

Now we are being asked to approve another E-SPLOST. A penny doesn't sound like much to some people, but when all things that we are taxed continue going up, pennies make a big difference when you are on a fixed income. I'm sure another County SPLOST fund will be coming up soon for a vote.

Union County residents will carry the burden of this, tourists and part-time residents will only pay a small part.

When they leave our county, guess who's left to collect the pennies from? It takes all we can do to keep up with the maintenance of our

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The Trip

The study of history has always intrigued me. As a boy there were many classes at school in which I always paid close attention. Biology and science always held my curiosity. But, what I really enjoyed was listening to the lectures of Coach Bobby Chappell in World History. He made all those dates we had to memorize come alive for me. But, my appetite for history began much earlier. I can remember my grandmother taking me to a place called the "Rockbridge" on her family property. I was told that Indians had lived under the ledge of rock years ago before the Indian removal. You can still see carvings in the rock left by those ancient people. These carvings made me wonder about the people who lived in this area before my lifetime.

One summer I secured a job with the Youth Conservation Corp in Chickamauga National Park. My job involved cleaning the grounds and building structures for the enjoyment of park visitors. One day a ranger talked with us about archaeology, showing us a collection of cannon balls, bullets, wagon wheels and other items left from the battle.

A friend of mine inherited a house that was standing during that great battle. She and her husband renovated the house and moved into it as a young couple. She invited me to have dinner one day with her and her husband. We walked into her home and there was a piece of plexiglass covering a hole in her wall. She explained that her great grandmother was eating supper with her family at their home when a cannon ball ripped through the wall of their house. The family preserved the hole with glass in remembrance of the Battle of Chickamauga.

As you can see I enjoy history. So, a few years ago my wife and I had the opportunity to tour the Holy Land in Israel. I jumped at this chance to visit this place. But, I must say I was quite apprehensive about the trip. I was very nervous upon landing in Tel Aviv. But, we were greeted by the nicest people and as we traveled throughout the country we were treated well by everyone. I say this to let you know I never felt threatened while in Israel.

We were able to visit the old city in Jerusalem. We visited the Arab Quarter which is a food lover's delight. The smells of the varied spices coupled with the best tasting bread in the world is like visiting heaven. Another place we experienced was the Dead Sea. The concentration of salt in this body of water is very high which increases the buoyancy of your body. In other words you cannot sink and the compounds

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Growing Transplants from Seed

If you're like me, our January thaw always gets you in the mood for some planting! Well, the good news is that while spring may be a couple more months away, you can still start planning for growing your vegetable and ornamental transplants as the ground thaws.

I know many of us will buy transplants from garden centers, but honestly, the most cost effective way to produce your own fruits and veggies is by starting from seed and growing your own transplants. You should plant your seeds 6-8 weeks before you plan on putting them in the ground, so now is the perfect time to be shopping around for vegetable and flower varieties. When purchasing your seeds, make sure that they were packaged recently by looking at the information on the packet. The packaging will also have valuable information on how far apart the transplants will eventually need to be spaced, how deep the seed needs to be planted, and much more information.

Always use a "seed starting" mixture in a flat or some small pots as a planting medium. This material drains much better than top soil or potting soil, because seedlings are highly susceptible to rot diseases. This ensures your seeds and seedlings have enough water to germinate and grow while still avoiding disease.

Though their roots are at risk of rot, the tissue above ground is also at risk of drying out, so use a cover on your flats or pots to hold in some humidity. Starting seedlings in individual cells of a flat or their own pots will prevent overcrowding, root entanglement, and competition for resources, reducing transplant shock upon planting.

Seedlings do best with 16 hours of day-light. Sometimes, you might need to supplement their light with a lamp if you do not get much sunlight indoors. If this is the case, always keep the light positioned 2-3 inches above the seedlings, raising the light source as they grow. After a few weeks, you will see the first "true" leaves emerge. At this point, the plant is ready to be "hardened off." This process also prevents transplant shock and should be started about two weeks prior to planting the transplants. Move the pots or flats containing your seedlings outside (as long as weather permits) and gradually expose them to more and more sunlight each day. This will allow them to get used to outdoor conditions so they will be better able to adapt once put in the ground.

Once you are ready to plant them, make soil amendments according to the recommendations

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UGA Extension From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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