

## Rural Addressing: Where is Your Sign?

Imagine this scenario: Late one night, your kitchen starts on fire in rural Dunn County. You evacuate the house and dial 911 from your cell phone requesting help from the fire department. The E911 dispatcher asks for your rural address, as your cell phone is not linked to your address the same way your land line phone is. "I don't know it" you say, "but here is my legal land description!"

The fire department heads out, but it's dark and there is a blizzard making it difficult for them to see. Your driveway is long and the house cannot be seen from the roadway because of all the trees. The fire department cannot find your driveway as the rural address sign has not been put up yet. It's still in the barn where it's been for the past 6 months since you picked it up from the County. It was on your list of things to do, but you haven't taken the few minutes to put it up yet.

The fire department phones you asking for directions. "We live next to Mr. Smith. Our driveway is just past his red barn! It's hard to see because of all the trees!" The fire fighter on the phone says "We don't know where Mr. Smith lives, and it's so dark and snowing so hard we can't see the color of the buildings." You try your best to guide them, but in the panic you forget many details on how to navigate to your house.

As the fire rages out of control, you start to panic. If you had only put up that sign and knew your rural address, the fire department could have found your driveway already.

Finally, you can see the red lights of the trucks reflecting off the snow and tell the fire department they must be nearby and to look for a driveway. It takes a few more minutes to see the access but finally the fire department makes it to your location. The fire is put out quickly, but because of the delay, the fire has spread causing you to not only lose your kitchen, but your living room and bedroom too. The next day you put up your rural address sign, but it is 12 hours too late....

### A Brief History of Rural Addressing in Dunn County:

The rural addressing (fire number) system, as it exists today, was the result of a County Ordinance (Number 52) Signed by the members of the Development Committee and adopted on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1992. This was a major overhaul of the old rural route system, and was implemented to enhance the quality of service provided by the Dunn County Emergency Services Department. For over 17 years the process has been facilitated by the Dunn County Zoning Office.

Many changes have taken place throughout those 17 years. Perhaps the most significant being the advances in technology within the E911 Department and the Dunn County Department of Administration Office/Geographic Information Systems Division.

The Dunn County Executive Committee has drafted and adopted a new "Uniform System For Numbering Properties and Principal Buildings in Dunn County", effective on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

This redirects the administration of this ordinance from the Dunn County Zoning Office to the Dunn County Department of Administration.

