Have you got ICE in your mobile?

ICE seen as cell phone lifeline for emergency personnel

, , 20By TIM DISSELKOEN

It started as a campaign by a British paramedic, but following the terrorist attacks in London, the ICE movement has picked up steam, crisscrossing the globe.

ICE which is an acronym for **"in case of emergency"** is targeted at cell phone users. By storing emergency contacts under the heading ICE in a cellular phone's directory, emergency response personnel have a uniform means of accessing contact information for patients who are unable to communicate themselves.

The idea was the brainchild of Bob Brotchie, a paramedic for 13 years with the East Anglian Ambulance service in Great Britain.

"I was reflecting on some of the calls I've attended at the roadside where I had to look through the mobile phone contacts struggling for information on a shocked or injured person," Brotchie said on the East Anglian Web site. "It's difficult to know who to call. Almost everyone carries a mobile phone now, and with ICE we'd know immediately who to contact and what number to ring up."

Indeed, so many people have cell phones, that it can be a lifeline in an emergency. In a report released July 9, the Federal Communication Commission noted more than 5.4 million cell phone users in Michigan as of June 2004, the most recent date available. That is rapidly approaching the 5.9 million land-line phones in Michigan, according to FCC numbers.

While calls found that local police agencies were not familiar with the program yet, paramedics are pushing the ICE Program. Jerre Sytsma, operations manager for American Medical Response ambulance service in West Michigan said victims of trauma from an accident, stroke victims, seizure victims, diabetics and others can be unable to assist paramedics. ICE is designed to help

get the proper assistance to a patient as soon as possible and also to notify loved ones of the emergency.

"I think ICE would be very helpful," Sytsma said. "There have been so many times we've had to go through cell phones to try to find a contact. It happens quite often."

Sytsma said it is important to list a couple of contacts as ICE, ICE2, ICE3, etc. and to ensure each of the emergency contacts is aware of your medical history, especially any allergies to medicines.

"We want to make sure the entire wireless industry is doing this the same way," Clevenger said. This is another really important use for cell phones. It's a good idea."

He said those who have cell phones but are not sure how to program their phone directory can take them to the place of purchase where their staff would be happy to assist customers.

There have been phony virus alerts circulating that adding ICE listings to a cell phone can make them vulnerable to a virus attack that seeks out numbers under that listing. Several urban legend Web sites such as snopes.com have reported the e-mails that warn of such a risk as a hoax.

Sytsma said it is a wonderful idea that could become vital, and should be undertaken by everyone with a phone.

"It's too important to ignore,"

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The Michigan State Police-Flint Post, Genesee County Sheriff's Department Paramedic Division and the Flint City Police Department have been contacted and are currently knowledgeable of the ICE Program, and due to the newness of this program all law enforcment departments are in the process of distributing ICE information.