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Call box placed on St. Joseph pier



Now, in a life-or-death situation, police are only a button away

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Posted: 06/03/2004 06:30 pm

Police say they can think of two drownings at the piers in Saint Joseph where response times were delayed because callers couldn't get to a phone to alert police in time. There isn't a lifeguard stationed at the pier and some people had to run to town for help, but that won't be the case anymore.

What I hope is that it's the beginning of no more tragedies on the pier, remarked St. Joseph Mayor Mary Goff.

Call boxes are common along the coast of Lake Michigan, but the city of Saint Joseph never had one until Thursday. In a life-or-death situation, now police are only a push of a button away with the new \$5000 device.

It's very easy to use and operate. All you do is push the button on it and it dials directly into 911. There's no receiver to pick up. You just push the button to talk into it and the blue light on the top will strobe when it's activated, explains Saint Joseph Police Chief Mark Clapp.

St. Joseph City Manager Frank Goff comments, It's one of those things that you hope you never have to use but it's something we think is going to greatly improve our safety. We feel this is at least an effort to try to prevent any more drownings on the piers.

The end of the pier can be very dangerous, especially during the winter months. That's why the safest place for the call box is the shoreline.

If the call box at the north pier proves to be successful and helpful, Berrien County police say they'll consider putting one of those safety devices on the south pier as well.

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