

Officials: No need to fear 911 misdials

◆Thermopolis Police Chief Mark Nelson said individuals have nothing to fear from a common mistake.

by Tom Burkindine

It has been more than a decade since cellular phone service has been available in Hot Springs County, and a common mistake still causes dialers to panic.

Sometimes when callers hurriedly dial Verizon wireless numbers, instead of dialing the 921 prefix for local cell phones, they misdial 911 and find themselves connected with emergency dispatchers. Flustered at being asked about the nature of the emergency, panicked callers often hang up without a word.

While this may seem like the easiest way to put an end to the situation, it does not necessarily produce the expected outcome. When dispatchers receive a 911 hang-up call, they will try to call back the number. If they cannot make contact with the caller, law enforcement must be sent to the scene.

This may seem excessive to some, but consider the possibilities of the call's origin. A citizen who may be victimized might be forced to end an emergency call abruptly, either by coercion or force. Someone in need of medical attention may be unable to complete his or her call for help before they lose the ability to communicate. In either of these cases, it is imperative that dispatchers send authorities to the scene.

Without additional information, Bill Gordon, dispatch ad-

ministrators and administrative assistant for the Thermopolis Police Department, said officials must assume the worst. In reality, the proper course of action after misdialing is to remain on the line and explain the situation.

"People simply need to stay on the line long enough to tell us it was a mistake," Gordon said. "That way we can save time and manpower."

In 2009, local dispatch sent police officers and sheriff's deputies on 95 welfare checks, which is how 911 hang-up calls are coded. Of those calls, 23 were 911 misdials.

"We don't mind (sending officers and deputies to the scene of a hang-up). It's our job, but we need to make the best use of our officers' time," Gordon said. "When you consider 24 percent of those welfare calls could have been avoided, that's a significant expenditure."

Thermopolis Police Chief Mark Nelson said individuals have nothing to fear from a common mistake.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said. "Just stay on the line and we can avoid having to send anyone out."

The fear of an encounter with law enforcement may be the crux of the issue. While filing a false police report is a crime, there is no penalty for accidentally dialing 911. It is impossible to ascertain the mindset of the individuals making these calls, but it can be assumed there is some fear present.

Airing it out



Hot Springs County fifth-grader Jazmyn Schuft-Clark takes advantage of the recent seasonably warm weather

to practice her trampoline jumping skills at a home outside of Thermopolis. — Donna Pennoyer photo

Hot Springs top-visited state park

by Cindy Glasson

Visitors to Hot Springs State Park and Boysen Reservoir were up during 2009, according to a recent report from the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources.

The report shows Hot Springs State Park was by far the most popular park as far as visitors with 1,214,108, followed by Glendo State Park in Glendo at 222,688.

While Hot Springs State Park visitation rose just 2 percent, visitation statewide rose 11 percent, the highest visitor count for state parks and historical sites in four years.

Numbers indicate about a quarter-million more people toured Wyoming's parks and historical sites in 2009 than did in 2008. Hot Springs State Park accounted for nearly one-half of the 2,841,948 total visitors.

Visitors to Boysen Reservoir increased 17 percent in 2009, totaling more than 90,000 boaters and campers.

Sites with the biggest jump in visitor numbers included the Oregon Trail Ruts in Guernsey, up 50 percent from 2008, Hawk Springs recreation area in Guernsey, up 46 percent and the Bear River Walking paths in Evanston, up 41 percent from 2008.

The most popular museums and visitor centers in the state included Lander's Sinks Canyon Visitor Center, the Bear River Trail Visitor Center in Evanston and the Fort Bridger Museum, also in Evanston.



Regional wrapup

The Thermopolis boys and girls basketball teams traveled to Douglas last weekend to participate in the Class 3A East Regional tournament. Accompanied by the cheerleading squad and the Bobcat team mascot (Justice Stehlin), which cheered on the Purple and Gold throughout most of the action, neither team advanced to this weekend's state tournament in Casper. At right, Thermopolis senior Baylee Dickinson shows her frustration while sitting on the bench late in the fourth quarter of Saturday's must-win consolation match-up against Torrington after she fouled out. For complete details on the Bobcats and Lady Bobcats at the regional tournament, turn to Sports, pages 6-7.

— Keith E. Domke photos



County's school enrollment jumps

by Keith E. Domke

Hot Springs County school enrollment grew by 4.74 percent from 2006 to 2009, the fifth-highest percentage in the state, according to figures recently released by the Wyoming Department of Education. District 1 totaled 654 students at the end of 2009 as compared to 623 at the end of 2006.

However, enrollment decreased by one student from 2008 to 2009.

According to the WDE data, Hot Springs had 623 students enrolled at the end of 2006, 642 at the end of 2007, 655 at the end of 2008 and 654 at the end of 2009. Those figures add up to a 2.96 and 1.99 percent increases during those first two annual comparisons and a 0.15 percent

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County	2009 final	% change 2006-09
Albany	3,581	2.51
Big Horn	2,068	-1.31
Campbell	8,221	7.35
Carbon	2,454	1.59
Converse	2,378	2.94
Crook	1,104	2.17
Fremont	6,336	-0.38
Goshen	1,808	-1.62
Hot Springs	654	4.74
Johnson	1,234	-2.19
Laramie	14,077	2.50
Lincoln	3,242	2.53
Natrona	11,754	2.64
Niobrara	620	41.29
Park	3,972	0.93
Platte	1,255	-12.67
Sheridan	4,190	3.68
Sublette	1,655	10.15
Sweetwater	7,648	8.94
Teton	2,317	4.23
Uinta	4,395	2.21
Washakie	1,437	1.88
Weston	1,094	1.65
State	87,494	3.30

State: Town can't use water anymore

by Tom Burkindine

The Town of Thermopolis has been ordered to stop using water from the hot springs outside the state park grounds.

State Engineer's Office assistant superintendent Dave Deutz sent the town a letter ordering Thermopolis employees "cease and desist from further diversion/pumping of water from the Big Spring within Hot Springs State Park."

The letter stated approved

uses of hot springs water are limited to bathing, medicinal, maintenance of flow over the terraces and irrigation. All use must be confined within the boundaries of the park. The letter gave the town options to apply for a permit that temporarily would allow use of the water or file for an enlargement of the Big Spring for industrial use.

Assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill said the town has used

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