

Phillips County looking into new paging system

Written by Chris Lee

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Phillips County is close to making a decision on a new paging system for emergency personnel in the county.

Current pagers used by emergency personnel, law enforcement and others will need to be re-banded to a narrower width by Jan. 1, 2013.

County administrator Randy Schafer and CommCenter director Kenny Gaskill said instead of purchasing roughly 200 new pagers, they have been looking into a new system.

Pending E911 board and County Commissioner approval, the new system will be purchased by the E911 board, according to Schafer and Gaskill.

The new system will have reverse 911 capabilities. This would allow the county to send messages and alerts to residents when major emergencies occur—such as weather related emergencies. The opt-in option is something they are excited about, according to Schafer.

For the last six months or so, the county has been looking into about five different systems. Up until a few weeks ago, they felt they had found one they were comfortable with, until another company contacted them with another system.

Monday, Dec. 12, roughly 30 attended a meeting at Phillips County Event Center to review the two systems the county is currently looking at. Those attending the meeting represented schools, law enforcement agencies, city and county agencies and emergency medical services from Phillips County. Representatives from Sedgwick County were also in attendance.

With the new system, Phillips County would likely be able to connect with Sedgwick County.

Pagers would become a thing of the past with either system the county goes with. Cell phones,

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land lines and computers would be used to receive alerts. Emergency personnel would receive text messages, phone calls and voice messages to alert them of emergencies.

Representatives from WENS (Wireless Emergency Notification Systems) and Everbridge held a teleconference to explain their products to those in attendance.

Both systems are equally priced and offer many of the same features. Schafer said they will most likely make a decision and have a new paging system in place way ahead of the 2013 deadline.

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