



## Reverse 911

- Melissa Andrews

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Sunday's tornado in Evansville is sending a message to emergency managers in the Wabash Valley. Emergency warning systems need to be updated.

Monday, we told you how Vigo County Sheriff Jon Marvel wants to purchase Reverse 911 to help warn people of dangerous situations since the county is not fully covered by warning sirens.

Whether a deadly tornado or even a water main break happens in your neighborhood, Reverse 911 is ready to step in and warn you. Instead of you picking up a phone to call 911, 911 calls you.

"The system comes with a map that allows municipalities to highlight only the affected area," says Kevin McCarthy, President of Reverse 911. It's not only for emergencies. The system can also be used to alert neighborhoods that a sex offender has moved in or if a child is missing.

When the system calls, you decide what messages you want to receive. "They could say press one if you only want to receive calls in case of an emergency. Press two if you want to receive routine public safety calls," says McCarthy.

And only users with a password can send out alerts, so you're not receiving calls that don't affect you.

McCarthy says, "If it's a familiar person, the police chief he may be on television everyday, the sheriff, the emergency management director, the mayor, so you'll very frequently see them make the phone call." And maybe save a few lives the next time severe weather hits.

Most systems are set up to dial homes between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. but can be over-ridden in case of an emergency. Sheriff Marvel says the county could pay for the service using existing 911 fees.