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Golf course GIS maps to improve access for Lee's first responders

Fort Myers, FL, Jan. 16, 2015 — With 108 golf courses, the potential exists for medical emergencies on the links in Lee County. However, new Geographic Information System (GIS) maps have made it easier and safer for first responders to reach people in need.

The Lee County GIS Department spent more than 800 hours producing maps of Lee's public and private golf courses. The maps have each tee, fairway and green labeled so Lee County Public Safety responders will know precise locations of emergencies. Additionally, each location has a corresponding access point for the EMS units. All of the data points are linked in a large matrix.

In the past, when a 911 call came from a course, emergency crews typically responded to the clubhouse address and solicited help to reach the patient from there, delaying response time. The GIS-based system allows the closest physical address to be pinpointed and used for faster response.

Lee County Public Safety recommends golfers to carry a cell phone and make note of each hole number and position on the hole (tee box, fairway or green) as they play. If an emergency arises, these details will help responders use the new technology.

The idea for this new series of GIS maps began in April 2011. The Lee County Public Safety Emergency Dispatch Center collaborated with Shadow Wood Golf and Country Club and the Estero Fire District as a prototype. Then in 2014, work began to make it a countywide service. This winter and spring's golfers will be the first to experience that, should emergencies happen.

As of 2013, Lee County has the seventh highest golf course holes per capita in the United States, with 393 people per hole, according to the National Golf Foundation. (Nearby Naples ranked first in the nation with 212 people per hole.)

"Such a golf-focused region will benefit from this system that makes for a safer golfing experience," Public Safety Director Rob Farmer said.

This winter, as the population peaks with winter residents and visitors, Lee County Public Safety staff will visit each of Lee's golf courses to distribute free posters to increase public awareness among the golf community.

For more information, contact Chief Tina M. Taviano, Lee County Public Safety, at (239) 533-3618. Information about the new program will be posted soon to www.lee-county.com.

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Note to media: For a PDF of the poster, email bclayton@leegov.com.