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TENS-an Important Call

By Andrea A. Firth

A couple of weeks ago, many residents in Orinda and Moraga received an automated, voice recorded call from the Sheriff's Department requesting them to be on the look out for a missing 77-year old man who had ventured out on bike ride but had not returned when expected. When the family contacted the Orinda Police Department for help locating the missing senior, Chief Jeff Jennings decided to activate TENS-the Telecommunications Emergency Notification System.

"TENS is used primarily as a community emergency notification system," says Jennings, adding that the system can also be used to contact the public regarding other situations when specific criteria are met. Jennings has used the system to help locate individuals about seven times in his 18-year career with the Sheriff's Department. "The system really does help us to find people, but there are definite parameters for its use," he adds.

Jennings activated the system to contact homes within a two-mile radius of the missing Orindan's home, an estimated 8,000 residences. The multiple calls were generated from the Sheriff's Department. Because the incoming number is locked, caller identification screens display a number with several 0's. While the human-voice recorded call will be picked up by a phone answering system, Jennings stresses that it is important to pick up these calls as the system is a significant early warning asset in the case of emergencies.

Fortunately, the recent use of the TENS system in Orinda did facilitate finding the missing senior. Individuals contacted the police regarding sightings of the older man in two locations in northern Orinda, which subsequently led to finding him. Case solved.

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