

Make 511 part of emergency plans

System provides travel information for 29 major area roads

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

With Florida in the midst of hurricane season, the Florida Department of Transportation encourages Southwest Floridians and visitors to incorporate its free 511 service into their emergency preparedness plans.

By dialing 511, callers can hear real-time traffic reports about 29 area roads, including Interstate 75. During emergency evacuations, 511 provides up-to-the-minute reports about major evacuation routes, bridge and road closures and roadways with toll suspensions. Much of the same information available on the 511 phone service is available online at www.SouthwestFlorida511.com.

The site also contains links to hurricane and emergency information resources, weather reports and other advisories.

The 511 system uses speech-recognition technology that allows people simply to say the name of the roadway or area where they want traffic information. Callers are automatically connected to Florida's Statewide 511 system and then can ask for Southwest Florida 511. Once connected to the regional service, callers can request information by saying a road's name or "number," or they may say the name of the city or county where they want traffic information. For example, people may ask for Cleveland Avenue or US 41, or ask for Fort Myers or Lee County. ■



Beware of bogus email advisory

Cell phone restriction not true

The Lee County Sheriff's Office has received a number of inquiries regarding new traffic laws alleged to have been enacted in Florida and effective the first of this month. The information contained in the e-mail, which include restrictions to cellular phone use and increased fines for various offenses, is not accurate. Officials first noted the effective date is listed as August, not July or January as most common in Florida.

Recipients of the e-mail are asked not to forward the bogus information to family and friends, as requested in the correspondence, to avoid proliferating the misleading information. It's likely some of the information contained may be applicable in other areas of the United States. Certainly some violations referenced are enforceable in Florida, but the enhanced fines are not. ■

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