

# VFD utilizes new technology

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Until last month, there was no way for the Vermillion Fire Department to know how many of its members were going to respond to a call.

Now, thanks to a Web-based program from IamResponding.com, they not only know how many will be responding to emergencies, but which members will be responding.

The system works by sending data to a large TV screen that is prominently displayed at the station.

As volunteers verify they will be coming, their name appears on the screen.

"When we receive a call, dispatch sends out a message with the address (of the emergency site) in text form," explained Fire Chief Richard (Shannon) Draper. "Every member has a phone number pre-programmed into their phone. They just dial it and put the phone down, and it will automatically populate the TV screen so that our members know who's responding."

This allows the volunteers to operate on a timelier basis, Draper said.

"The biggest hurdle for us, we're all volunteer, and there are times where I may have a hard time getting some volunteers (to respond)," he said. "Time is of the essence, and so prior to have this system, a big hurdle was not knowing if anyone was coming."

"We might have somebody sitting out on the apron waiting five, 10 minutes, seeing if anyone else will come," he said.

Alternately, volunteers who arrived just a few minutes after everyone else might have found

themselves left behind. "We might have three people jump on a truck and leave, and then all of a sudden somebody else pulls in," Draper said. "Now we can see immediately who is coming, because I'm requiring all our firefighters to use this system."

Along with improving response time, the program also helps Draper decide if he needs to call neighboring departments for assistance.

IamResponding was purchased with funds raised by an association to which the volunteers belong that has in the past bought fire trucks and other equipment for the department, Draper said.

In addition to the program itself, the TVs that display the program data were purchased for both fire stations, as well as the dispatch center.

"They've wanted this for some time," he said. "There seemed to be some questions on the implementation of it, and so I've been working with the company to get through that and get all our questions answered."

The program was installed last month and already has been utilized by the department.

"It's really interesting to watch this during a real emergency because (the screen) fills up real quick," Draper said.

The acquisition of the program makes Vermillion the second community in the area to use it.

"The only other one in this region is North Sioux City," Draper said. "There are other departments that are going toward this, (but) it's totally new to the area."

For more information, visit iamresponding.com.



## Thank you, Sen. Johnson

These days, we would say he's "got our back."

For 28 years, Sen. Tim Johnson, D-SD, has had the back of South Dakotans in Congress.

He has helped secure money for the Lewis & Clark water development project, fought for country-of-origin labeling for meat and voted in favor of Social Security and other programs for seniors. He favored the farm bill and conservation efforts and was an ally of the state Indian tribes. He also worked in conjunction with the state delegation to secure money for the downtown railroad relocation in Sioux Falls and to save Ellsworth Air Force Base from budget cuts. A moderate Democrat, he's worked

on thousands of smaller things for individual constituents and the state as a whole.

In between the work in Washington, where he was named Senate banking chairman, he has kept in contact with South Dakotans and continued to feel like he was "one of us." He's a South Dakotan who traces his roots back for generations, a University of South Dakota graduate and a hard, often behind-the-scenes, worker.

Although his speech changed and he uses a scooter for mobility after a brain hemorrhage in 2006, he — along with a well-chosen, experienced staff — worked as hard as he could for South Dakota. And people re-

ected him, just like they had time and time again. He never lost a statewide election.

Most politicians have detractors, and granted some don't always appreciate Johnson. In recent years, he has been less visible in the state, for example.

On Tuesday, our senior senator said he will retire after serving out his term until 2015. He's 66, and it's time to plan for a slower pace with his wife, Barbara, and their grandchildren. He'll come home to South Dakota to live but might spend some winter months in Virginia as well, he said.

Before he goes, Johnson has some work he'd like to finish and he has a laundry list of priorities with a

promise that he will continue to work hard to make the people of South Dakota proud. We encourage those efforts. His announcement is the beginning of a long campaign to fill his seat, and we need a senator who will remain attentive and engaged for the people of South Dakota.

While there still will be almost two years before Johnson leaves his Senate post, today it's appropriate to thank him for his generosity of time, knowledge, commitment and grace to a state that benefited from his work.

— Argus Leader, March 26, 2013

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