

# One Call Will Truly Do It All

**February 25, 2008**—*Who can I call to report a dead animal in the street? How long does it take to repair a pothole once it has been reported? Where do I pay a parking ticket? Where can I get a marriage license? Who is my Council Member? Commissioner?*

The answers to these questions, and many more, will be quickly and easily addressed with today's official launch of the Webb County-City of Laredo 3-1-1 Customer Service phone line.

Much like 9-1-1 is known to residents young and old as the number to call to report all emergencies, 3-1-1 is the phone number that was designated by the Federal Communications Commission in 1997 for non-emergency governmental services. Thanks to an interlocal agreement between Webb County and the City of Laredo, this partnership will now bring enhanced customer service through 3-1-1 to the citizens of Webb County and the City of Laredo.

“Customer service is a big priority for both Webb County and the City of Laredo,” said Commissioner Jerry Garza, Precinct 3, who first brought up the idea of 3-1-1 in 2005 when County Commissioners first approved the idea. “Both agencies had designated customer service representatives; however, oftentimes, the public did not know the correct number to call, and they would then become even more frustrated as they were transferred from department to department, trying to get an answer to their question, or simply, to report an issue. Now, with 3-1-1, residents will have an easy phone number to remember to call for information or to request services, and the 3-1-1 customer service representatives will be able to provide consistent information regarding County or City services or departments and be able to track, refer and respond to the resident's service request, all through a consolidated call center,” Commissioner Garza added.

When residents call 3-1-1, the call will go directly to the 3-1-1 call center. If the caller simply has a question, i.e. service request, a customer service representative taking the call will answer the question. If, however, the caller would like to report a problem, such as a dead-animal pick-up or pothole repair, the service request will be entered in the 3-1-1 tracking software, known as WebQA. The citizen will be given a reference number so that they will be able to call back and track the status of the request. The service request is then routed to the appropriate City of Laredo or Webb County staff for resolution. Based on the service request, a performance standard will be established for resolution for each type. For example, a pothole will be fixed by the City within 72 hours, weather permitting.

Aside from dialing 3-1-1, citizens will also be able to access 3-1-1 online via links on both the City of Laredo and Webb County homepages at [www.cityoflaredo.com](http://www.cityoflaredo.com) or [www.webbcountytx.gov](http://www.webbcountytx.gov). Online citizens will be able to search for frequently asked questions for City of Laredo and Webb County services, submit questions, submit service requests, keep track of the status of their service request, and view the history of all the information and/or service requests they have submitted.

“What a wonderful example of both the City of Laredo and Webb County coming together to provide a much-needed, helpful service that will benefit all of our citizens,” said Council Member Mike Garza, District I, who was also instrumental in bringing the partnership to fruition on the City's behalf, by pushing for the interlocal agreement, as well as funding for the project. “This just goes to show that by looking at the big picture and working towards the common good

for all of our constituents, the City of Laredo and Webb County will continue to bring projects and services that ultimately, improve customer service and make us more responsive and accountable to the public,” said Council Member Garza (no relation).

Citizens will be able to access 3-1-1 from their landline, and some, from their cellular phones. However, as of today, not all wireless carriers have access to simply dialing 3-1-1 to route Webb County residents to the call center. The FCC allows wireless carriers up to six months to deploy the request for 3-1-1 services; all carriers should have access to 3-1-1 by mid-April. Currently, AT&T wireless customers who dial 3-1-1 will be routed to the San Antonio 3-1-1 call center. Additionally, some wireless phones will not allow direct dialing to 3-1-1. There are technical issues with some handsets that customers should address with their wireless carriers. Finally, 3-1-1 is available to all landline residents in Webb County, except those residents of Bruni and Mirando City, who will have to dial direct into the call center, by dialing (956) 721-2480.

The 3-1-1 headquarters is located at 1200 Washington Street, known locally as the old Tex-Mex building. The building and the property belongs to Webb County; the City of Laredo invested all initial start-up costs, while Webb County shares in the annual operating costs for the system, software and personnel. The hours of operation for the 3-1-1 call center are 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., seven days a week, excluding City holidays, with one customer service representative per shift. The call system does have recording and tracking information to be able to return any missed calls. Eventually, the City of Laredo and Webb County hope to have the system operational with additional call takers, and the ability to initiate a reverse 3-1-1 call, to inform residents in the event of emergencies, etc.

The City of Laredo visited San Antonio’s and Corpus Christi’s 3-1-1 call centers, as well as surveying 15 other U.S. cities that currently have 3-1-1 services, to help in the development and implementation of Laredo’s system.