

# **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

Piedmont, AL – 8/27/2014

The city of Piedmont is the second city in Calhoun County to join the *SafeCity* Program, developed to improve safety in municipal offices. Mayor Bill Baker also recognized the high risk associated with offices that handle large amounts of cash and easily negotiable money orders frequently used for payment of court fines, licenses, and utility bills.

The City of Piedmont has two offices located outside the municipal office complex (courts and utilities) and a county annex connected to the City Hall offices. All are at high risk for robbery. A commercial alarm service provides emergency call buttons in the court clerk's office and the utility office. Unfortunately, the call processing time exceeds the time of the typical armed robbery.

Casey Ponder, Electrical Utilities Manager had expressed the need for a faster means of notifying the local police department in times of emergency. Through an agreement with Police Chief Steven Tidwell, a special radio receiving unit is installed at the city dispatch center for immediate reception when call buttons are activated. The receiving unit, no larger than a desk calculator, also receives emergency weather alerts from NOAA when severe weather is approaching the city.

The new wireless notification system operates on an independent radio channel to eliminate any conflict with use of the police radio dispatch system. However the frequency used by the *SafeCity* system can be added to police officer radios to allow scanning reception by all officers. This can further reduce notification and response time from a current average of ten minutes to less than two minutes.

The call button used in the Court Clerk's office is battery powered and transportable which allows it to be used either in the office or in the courtroom as desired.

City Clerk Michelle Franklin noted that the system was acquired for only a few thousand dollars and there is no monthly charge or long term contract – a small price to pay to make Piedmont Alabama a safer place for our citizens and those who serve them.

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