

Let's Talk About...

BUILDING NUMBERS

Recently, I received a very official-looking letter that was addressed to my neighbor. It was on the same street, just the wrong house number, so I decided to simply put it in their mailbox. However, I didn't know this neighbor by name, and that's when I discovered just how hard a postman's job really is.

Very few of the houses in my neighborhood have the house number posted – not on the house, not on the mailbox, not painted on the curb, nowhere. And like so many in our city, my street splits and goes off in several directions, then comes back together, and it's hard to tell when the 100 block becomes the 200 block, then the 300, and so on. By the time I finally located the correct mailbox, I was amazed that the postman (who that day was a substitute) had managed to get any mail at all to the correct addresses.

What if, instead of the postman, that had been Emergency Medical Services looking for a particular house? Or the Police, responding to a call? How would they verify that they had reached the correct location?

You are probably thinking, "She must be really old...no one looks at house numbers...everyone, including EMS and the Police, uses GPS."

Well, in my job I use GPS every day to locate properties, and I know one thing for sure: It is often wrong. If I google my own address, it will pinpoint my house in the middle of the street one block east of my actual location. With the houses near that pinpoint not having their addresses posted, if you drove there, you wouldn't know which way to go. Last week a realtor called to ask about zoning restrictions for a property on West Highway 36. The Zillow map showed the property between Hamilton and Jonesboro. This is not an uncommon occurrence.

There is a City of Hamilton ordinance stating that all residential and commercial buildings "shall be identified by an identifying number of a minimum of four inches in height which is placed in a conspicuous manner easily viewed and identifiable from the street." That's basically all the ordinance says, so then it comes down to common sense.

The color of the numbers should be in sharp contrast to their background. Brass or bronze numbers should be avoided – they don't offer optimum visibility at night.

If the house is too far from the road, the house number should be displayed on the mailbox. You can also mount a sign above or below your mailbox. When posting your address number or a sign on the mailbox, shiny silver numbers on a black background should be avoided. These are washed out under the glare of headlights.

If a vehicle is frequently parked in front of the mailbox; it's acceptable to paint your house number on your curb. If your mailbox isn't in front of your house or near your driveway, post a house number sign in your yard. The house number, whether displayed on the house, mailbox, or curb, should be unobstructed by objects such as tree limbs, bushes, debris, garbage containers or decorations.

A house number sign should be placed near the porch light so it can be seen at night. When that isn't possible, invest in reflective house numbers. However, certain colors on reflective address number signs may glow too much under headlights, which can overshadow the number on the sign. This is a major cause of concern for emergency personnel. White numbers on a black background is an ideal combination of colors when displaying the number on the house, mailbox, or curb.

Locating you in an emergency can be a matter of life and death. You can make it easier for help to reach you, simply by properly displaying your house number.