

Union to buy siren

By MARK RANZENBERGER
Sun Staff Writer

Union Township leaders Wednesday voted to pay half the cost of a new disaster warning siren for the township, and will decide later where it should go.

The township board committed half the \$16,000 cost of a new warning siren, matching money available to the Isabella County Emergency Management Department from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

The Tribe recently earmarked part of a recent 2 percent payment to pay for eight more sirens to be placed near schools, parks and mobile home parks where sirens currently can't be heard. Emergency

management director Mark Griffis has been trying to come up with more money to install more sirens as part of the same project.

"If something happens, it could be the best \$8,000 we ever spent," said township Trustee Jim Horton.

Griffis said the sirens are useful to warn people outside of an approaching tornado or other emergency. The warnings are supposed to motivate people to head for cover and turn on radios and televisions to get more detailed information.

The new siren could be in operation in six to eight months, Griffis said. Board members will have to decide between now and then where

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Siren

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the new signal will do the most good.

Township Administrator Woodruff, using a computerized mapping system, said the areas where the township's population is most dense are the areas east of Mt. Pleasant and west of U.S. 127, and the section of Deerfield Road between Mission and Crawford. The Deerfield Road area is home to numerous student housing developments.

"There are 6,000 bedrooms down there with no outside warning," Woodruff said.

But township leaders appeared to be leaning more toward putting the siren near McDonald Park and its very popular softball and youth baseball diamonds.

"On any given weekday night, there are about 1,200 to 1,500 people out there," said township Supervisor James T. Collin.

He said he was at the park when a tornado warning was issued, and a siren about a half-mile away sounded.

"We heard it a little bit," Collin said, "but when the wind of the storm started, there was nothing."

Griffis said wind conditions can have a great effect on how far the sound travels. Collin said the densely populated area east of Mt. Pleasant already is covered by a siren in Jameson Park, and most of the homes are downwind.

Also Wednesday, the township voted to become an official client of Middle Michigan Development Corp. That will cost the township \$10,000, but Collin said the economic development organization should have the support.

"I'd like a little piece of the action," Collin said, noting that much of the vacant, developable land near Mt. Pleasant is in the township. "That's money well spent on behalf of the taxpayer."

MMDC Vice Chairman Rick Barz said the township's decision will benefit the entire community.

"It's economic development for the entire area," Barz said. "It's a win-win for everybody."