NEMSIS Use and Priority for GNIS Codes for Version 3.4.x

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Overview
The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) includes geographic names for all known places, features, and areas in the Unites States that are identified by a proper name. The NEMSIS Version 3 Standard relies on GNIS codes to identify geographic locations and mailing locations.

Purpose
The purpose of this description is to define what type of GNIS code is appropriate for each type of location. State and county codes are not an issue, since these codes are unique and exclusive. The codes at issue are GNIS codes used to identify more specific locations, such as cites, unincorporated areas, etc. The concern is that a particular geographic location (e.g., a specific city) could have a GNIS Civil code assignment and a GNIS Populated Place code assignment. Which to use?

The NEMSIS Version 3 data elements that rely on a GNIS codes with more specific locations include:

Elements	Interpretation
dContact.06	City, Mailing address
dFacility.08	City where located
dLocation.07	City where located
dPersonnel.05	City, Mailing address
ePatient.06 or eCad.57	City or township where located
eScene.17 or eCad.86	City or township (best approximation)
eDisposition.04 or eCad.96	City where located

A community with a GNIS Feature Class "Civil" code represents a political division formed for administrative purposes with legally defined boundaries (borough, county, incorporated place, parish, town and/or township).

A location assigned a GNIS Feature Class "Populated Place" code represents a named community with a permanent human population, usually not incorporated and with no legal boundaries, ranging from rural clustered buildings to large cities and every size in between (e.g., metropolitan areas, housing subdivisions, modular home communities, and named neighborhoods).

A percentage of communities classified with a "Populated Place" code will have a corresponding "civil" code classification and vice versa. These overlapping codes have no association with Census codes or Zip Codes.

Conclusions

The NEMSIS TAC recommendation is that a "civil" code be used when possible. If a civil code does not exist for the specific location, a "Populated Place" code should be used.

For more specific code information, please see the NEMSIS Suggested Lists
https://nemsis.org/technical-resources/version-3/version-3-resources/

Additional Sources

GNIS Codes Website: http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/download_data.htm