



DSPN

Disaster
Survival
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Network

Continuity IQ

Fast Facts for our Valued Friends and Clients February 2008

Here are some bullets and brain teasers about current events from your friends at Disaster Survival Planning Network (DSPN). In this issue, we provide information about emergency notification. If you'd like to forward this message to your colleagues, just click the "Forward Email" link at the bottom of this page.

Fast Facts about Emergency Notification

Did you know...

- Hurricane Katrina, the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004, along with tragic events such as the recent shooting rampage at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, have spurred interest in emergency alerting and domain awareness technology in the academic, public and private sectors.
- The number of choices, vendors, and types of solutions has increased significantly in recent years. Large numbers of alternatives are normally an advantage to the buyer. But a number this large can be confusing.
- According to Wikipedia, four things are required for a successful implementation: 1) an agreement as to what constitutes an emergency, 2) an agreement as to who can initiate an alert, 3) a system or systems by which the information can be quickly transmitted to the population, 4) an education program to teach those being alerted how to recognize an alert or what to do if a warning is broadcast.
- To evaluate an emergency management system, you must first understand the basics of how they work. Most systems have three capabilities--they allow you to select a subset of the population to send a message to, they allow you to create the message, then they launch the message across various channels of communications.
- Modern systems no longer provide a one-way blast purely focused on notification. They also provide reporting and tracking data that can be customized for your needs. With these capabilities, you can communicate with audiences by group, keep track of messages sent and responses received, and prioritize the problem areas that need to be addressed.
- No one solution offers a silver bullet. Emergency situations "always require a blend of different tools," said Don Rondeau, Vice President of Homeland Security at Alion Science and Technology.
- The outdoor portions of some systems are similar to the old civil defense warning sirens, with the key enhancement or distinction of being able to alert and direct people instead of just alarming them.
- Many agencies have influenced the design of emergency notification systems. For example,

the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are heavily involved in the petro-chemical and power industries. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is involved in natural disaster type applications. Since 2004, mass notification systems have been mandated in most United States Department of Defense (DOD) facilities.

- Early implementations of emergency notification systems typically had high up-front costs as well as high maintenance costs; however, modern systems use software as a service (SaaS) implementation models, thereby enabling the provider to reduce costs significantly by distributing the costs across an entire customer base.
- Modern systems are generally paid for through an annual subscription fee, and your data is stored on equipment that is owed and maintained by the provider.

Brain Teasers

True or False

1. A major research organization has found that call trees are no longer acceptable for emergency notification.
2. Organizations that use powerful emergency notification systems have a risk that their systems may be used accidentally or maliciously.
3. Data updates are automated in many large emergency notification systems.
4. "Crisis Communications" is a term that is generally applied to an organization's ability to deal with media representatives during an emergency.
5. Emergency notification systems aided in the evacuation of more than 500,000 people during the recent wild fires in Southern California.

Check your answers here...

Readiness Check

Hard-to-remember details:

1. Have you recently investigated some of the advanced capabilities of modern emergency notification systems?
2. Have you assessed the security of the equipment and data that comprises your emergency notification system?
3. Have you implemented policies that clarify who is authorized to use your emergency notification system and when?
4. Is the contact information in your emergency notification system routinely updated?

New from DSPN

Check these out on our website:

- Attending the Continuity Insights Conference in New Orleans this year? DSPN is staging a post-conference workshop at the conference hotel on May 8. [Click here for more details.](#)
- DSPN can provide a [customized tabletop exercise](#) at your site that will be very engaging for your executive team.
- [Pandemic Experience for Executives](#) is a new tabletop exercise from DSPN that is

customized for your situation at your site.

Comments and Contributions

Tell us what you think...



Thanks to all of you have sent us comments about this mailing.

In responding to recent incidents, did you discover an interesting detail that you would like to share with our readers? If so, send it along and we'll consider it for a future issue. If you want us to print a comment or submission about your company, be sure to give us permission when you write.

[Paul Klier](#)

Popular Services from DSPN

- [Benchmark Your Program Using NFPA 1600](#) is a one-day workshop we are staging in New Orleans in conjunction with the Continuity Insights Conference. Sign up now!
- In addition to our public workshops, DSPN offers [on-site workshops](#) that are customized for your priorities.

pklier@dspnetwork.com