the Availability Digest

Everbridge Emergency Notification
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Everbridge (www.everbridge.com) focuses on providing emergency/mass notification services (EMNS) via a simplified semi-automated mass-notification platform.

The inherent nature of an emergency or other critical incident means that the normal routine business of an organization or a public sector will be disrupted. Key to the successful coordination of resources to manage an incident is effective communications. This is the role of the Everbridge EMNS communications platform.

The Need for Emergency Notification Services

Corporations and public sectors have different needs for crisis communications. Corporations deliver goods and services and must be able to communicate with their employees, contractors, suppliers, other stakeholders, and local emergency services such as medical, fire, and police. Communication needs may range from office closings due to inclement weather to IT outages and to fires, floods, or explosions at corporate facilities.

Public sector notifications must reach the populace in general. They may range from school closings to shooters in the area and will be directed to a specified locality.

Both populations must be served in the event of area-wide catastrophes such as earth quakes, forest fires, and wide-spread flooding.

The bottom line is that, no matter where employees, contractors, or residents are located, the responsible authorities must be able to reach out and contact them, to offer help and direction, and to hear from them about their situations and needs. What is needed is a reliable central communication hub with one interface for every emergency or mass notification need, coupled with a well-thought-out and tested communication plan for any crisis.

The Everbridge suite of notification products fulfills these needs.

Are emergency notification services really needed? A recent survey by the Gartner group[1] yields a resounding yes! The number of annual incidents reported by the respondents to the survey indicated the following number of annual incidents that resulted in the use of EMNS systems:

None	8%	20-49	10%
1-4	20%	50-99	4%
5-9	20%	100-199	5%
10-19	13%	200 or more	20%

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[1] Magic Quadrant for U.S. Emergency/Mass Notification Services, *Gartner Group*; March 31, 2014.

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The Everbridge Product Suite

The Everbridge product suite provides a communication platform that allows an organization to easily communicate with selected recipients. Each recipient can respond to verify that it received the message, and recipients can also initiated unsolicited messages.

Mass communications can be to predefined lists or to targeted geographic areas. Communications is made more efficient by message templates that only require the filling-in of variable information.

Incident Management

The Everbridge product suite provides the facilities to ensure rapid notification to the people who must take action to resolve a crisis. It allows organizations to automate communication processes according to preconfigured rules, thus reducing the likelihood of costly human errors. There is no concern that a critical person will be left out. The use of predefined message templates ensures that messages will not be confusing and will be interpreted in the same way by all recipients.

When an incident occurs, simple drop-down menus allow the selection of the incident type and access to message templates appropriate to that incident. The user simply has to select the incident type and a message template, fill in the required information, select the predefined list of recipients, and send the notification. Messages can be sent that are tailored to different target audiences based on their role in the organization. The notification process is simple, rapid, and error-free.

A notification message may be sent to recipients over any number of channels, including voice, email, text messaging (IM), SMS, fax, pager, and others. Communication may be via land line to fixed telephones or terminals or to mobile devices. Each recipient can specify one or more means for communication in priority order.

An audit trail of what actually occurred is maintained to prove that the right people were notified, to record their responses and unsolicited messages, and to provide a timeframe of all activity.

A real-time dashboard shows the current status of all activity.

Consequently, with the Everbridge EMNS system,
- key personnel can be notified in minutes.
- nonessential but affected personal can receive critical information about the event.
- management can focus on critical decision making rather than message delivery.
- human error, misinformation, and rumors can be better managed and corrected.
- a documented notification log is provided for real-time and post-event management.

Message Templates

A key to the success of the EMNS system is the creation of predefined message templates. These are part of an overall crisis communication plan that must be established by the organization.

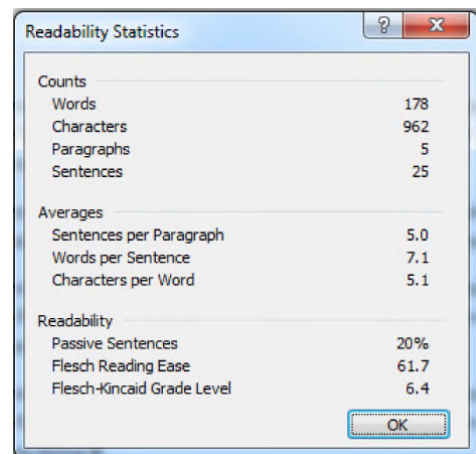The first step in the communication plan is to define:
- who needs information.
- what information is needed.
- when is the information needed.
- what is the best means to communicate the information.
- where might recipients be located at the time of an emergency.
- who should be the source for certain emergency messages.

The communication plan should cover the six stages of a crisis. Each will require its own communication procedures and messages. The six stages include:

- Warning – indications are received that an incident is in progress.
- Risk Assessment – determine the severity of the risk to the organization created by the incident.
- Response – determine the response to contain the incident.
- Management – follow the response strategy and make corrections as necessary,
- Resolution – recognize when the incident has been contained and no longer presents a risk.
- Recovery – recover from any ill effects caused by the incident.

Everbridge provides guidance for the creation of suitable message templates:

1. Craft messages in advance for all crises and emergencies that you can conceive. The messages provide fill-in-the-blanks for variable information. As an example,
   > "Our offices at <address> will be closed from <date> to <data> due to <reason>. Please work remotely as efficiently as possible.

2. Follow Robert Chandler's 3-3-30 rule (Robert Chandler is a recognized expert in crisis communication):
   - No more than 3 message points.
   - Deliver 3 short sentences.
   - Keep the key content to the first 30 words.

3. Keep the message simple. When things go wrong, people get stupider. A crisis message should be written at the sixth-grade level to ensure that it can be quickly digested. To determine the grade level of a message written in Microsoft Word, go the File tab, select options and then proofing, and check the boxes for "check grammar with spelling" and for "show readability statistics." Then go to the Review tab and select Spelling and Grammar Check. The resulting display will show the grade level of the message.

4. The messages must match the six stages of a crisis as described above.

5. Chose words that are suitable for the culture. For instance, some phrases in the U.S. have a totally different meaning in the U.K. (Example: warm spotted dick, a British pudding; bonnet – a hat in the U.S. a car hood in the U.K.; bespoke – customized in the U.K., no meaning in the U.S.). Don't use acronyms, abbreviations, or words with misleading connotations,.

6. Create logical groupings of recipients and craft specific messages for each group.

7. Test the communication plan, fix the problems, and train your people in its use. Schedule regular mock scenarios.

8. Include send and receive models, in which the recipient confirms the receipt of a message.

9. Determine the communication modes for the messages, such as voice, SMS, email, IM, Twitter, Facebook.

Everbridge has compiled a library of message samples for 30 use cases that is available to Everbridge customers.

Selecting Recipients

Once a message has been selected and completed for an incident, the recipients for that message must be determined. This is a major function of the communication plan.

There will probably be several groups of recipients for each phase of a crisis. Recipient groups can be defined by lists. These lists can be for employees, distributed staff, customers, suppliers, emergency personnel, and so forth.

Recipients can also be selected by location. For instance, a notification message might be sent to a particular address, to all in a zip code, or to all within a certain radius of a given point.

With Everbridge's GIS (Geographic Information System) technology, an interactive map can be displayed on a terminal or on a mobile device showing the location of various potential recipients. The recipients can be selected from the map.

GIS Location Visibility

Mobile Communications

The use of mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets is especially important so that an individual can be contacted wherever he may be – in the office, at home, traveling, or on vacation. Plans have to take into consideration that the Internet may not be available.

Everbridge's mobile apps allow a recipient to confirm that he has received a message. Mobile users can also generate unsolicited messages. These might include, for instance, pictures and other information from the scene of an incident or a request for help.

The mobile apps support GIS geographic displays to aid in the selection of recipients of messages generated by the mobile device. Mobile devices supported include iPhones, iPads, Android devices, and BlackBerry devices.

Social Media

The Everbridge services include the monitoring of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. This is useful, for instance, to determine impassable roads during a major storm. Using GIS facilities, alerts such as these can be shown to the recipient on a map displayed on the recipient's mobile device.

Weather Alerts

Everbridge automatically delivers weather alerts to its users via its Smart Weather Alerting feature. It uses information form AccuWeather and Weather Decision Technologies to determine what alerts to send to whom. An alert includes the detail of the threat, start and stop times, and the geographical area covered. Using its GIS capabilities, Smart Weather Alerting delivers a map of the alert only to those recipients who need to know

Interactive Visibility

With all of the above features, the Everbridge EMNS platform provides *interactive visibility* of an incident. It integrates recipient feedback, external data feeds such as weather, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter into a single view of the incident and the progress towards its resolution. It allows decision makers to make better informed decisions and communicate these strategies efficiently to designated recipients using information from multiple sources.

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The Everbridge Network Access

As an extension to the Everbridge EMNS capabilities, the Everbridge Network Access facility allows critical information and updates to be shared with impacted and interested stakeholders outside of the user's existing contact databases. Unconnected groups can now access the latest critical information from verified local resources.

The Everbridge Network Access facility allows diverse groups to coordinate their activities to ensure that there are no conflicting messages sent to their recipients.

Availability

Everbridge runs ten production centers hosted in the U.S., U.K., and Canada. Any data center will automatically fail over to another data center should it fail. Any data center can act as a recovery center for any other data center.

With this extensive infrastructure, Everbridge guarantees 99.99% uptime (an average of 50 minutes of downtime per year).

Everbridge at Top of Gartner's Magic Quadrant for U.S. EMNS Systems

Everbridge has earned the top spot in Gartner's March, 2014, Magic Quadrant of U.S. EMNS systems.[2]

Gartner Magic Quadrant for U.S. Emergency Mass/Notification Services

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[2] See reference 1.

Summary

The Everbridge Emergency/Mass Notification platform provides simple and reliable facilities for communicating with appropriate personnel during emergencies and other incidents. With its message templates and predefined recipient lists, the management of a company's response to an incident is rapid and protected from human error.

Everbridge has been particularly active in the areas of business and consumer services, higher education, oil and gas, financial services, government, and healthcare.