

THE SOLUTION TO EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

Emergency notification process automation can protect businesses, the community and the environment from potential hazards.

Irrespective of how vulnerable you view your own organisation to be, you can never do too much to ensure the safety of your capital and staff. In fact, if you think that your operations are totally secure and in a state of preparedness for an emergency, the chances are you have not given the matter enough thought. Contingency planning is central to a safe and secure organization, and it is rare that every aspect of security has been given sufficient attention. For instance, in the event of an emergency, could you guarantee that the communications channels across your enterprise and staff are appropriately managed to ensure adequate emergency notification?

One way of ensuring this is to employ an application service provider (ASP) for emergency notification. Intelligent Wireless Solutions (IWS), for example, is a leading ASP for the emergency notification vertical market that enables organizations to easily construct web-based employee, contractor and community event notification and dispatch networks consisting of wireless amber signs, pagers, radio communication and telephony. Central to this service is the Emergency Notification of Tactical Operations via a Unified Communications Hub (ENTOUCH), an advanced intranet browser-based communications switch designed for the rapid broadcast of critical information to all communications devices.

ENTOUCH enables the immediate effective broadcast of information to an individual or group of individuals using visual and audible alerting methods to all modern wireless and non-wireless communications devices. These include: e-mail; alpha-numeric pagers; voice pagers; wireless PDAs; fax machines; two-way radio systems; PSTN telephone networks; internet/intranet workstations; satellite phone systems; and security, fire and gas detection systems. In the event of an emergency, it is critical that staff can be contacted, and ENTOUCH ensures that no matter what communication channel they are using, they can always be reached.

Various types of information can be broadcast by the system, including: automatic alarm status to individuals from process, security and fire control systems alerting staff of changing conditions; 'man down' information broadcast instantly, giving the name and location of a man down incident (confined space OSHA compliance); personal information; localized plant weather information; and manual text. These systems and services enable customers to enjoy benefits that ensure that both the security of your company and the smooth communication within your organization are optimised.

Reliability and response time

Response time to critical events, for example, is vastly improved. When an upset or other emergency triggers an alarm, ENTOUCH immediately transmits the emergency data. You and your key people know exactly what is happening, and you know it immediately – so you can start handling an emergency the second it happens. Employee safety is also significantly increased, because with this immediate emergency notification, employees can ensure they take the right action, right away. Additionally, weather data helps ensure a proper evacuation process and warns against hazardous areas.

The system is designed to ensure the highest levels of reliability for peace of mind. Rather than use traditional consumer service delivery systems, proprietary systems were designed to provide maximum reliability to corporate customers. IWS has the ability to monitor customers' downstream service providers and alert them when they are unavailable. One such example in IWS experience occurred when a third-party paging carrier experienced a failure lasting almost 24 hours. IWS notified its clients and provided an alternative means of communication during the failure.

Furthermore, because IWS is an ASP for the emergency notification process, you have no responsibility for the purchase, installation and ongoing maintenance of hardware and software. Customization and implementation is dealt with by IWS, and it handles all the details including RF and communication infrastructure studies. Ultimately, the sophisticated emergency notification system can be utilized by simply accessing a secure customer area via the internet and web browser.

Protecting businesses from hazards

Of course, as the scale of operations increases, so the task of ensuring that there is adequate emergency notification becomes more challenging. The IWS virtual networks can be scaled to meet the differing demands of national and international companies, and its unique approach to outsourcing the emergency notification process allows companies of all sizes to access the latest technology available today. Corporations such as Amoco-BP, Boeing and Rohm & Haas Chemicals are just a few of the customers that rely upon IWS for their emergency notification process automation.

Businesses are increasingly realizing the importance of communication channels in an emergency situation, and how critical emergency notification process automation can prove. As the only vendor offering a web-enabled application, IWS delivers the technology directly to the desktop via the internet without requiring customers to purchase expensive hardware or specialized software. All companies need to successfully outsource their emergency notification process is an internet connection and a web browser.

Community alerting applications

Tornado emergency scenario. T=00:00 (time in minutes:seconds).

00:00 – Universal Weather and Aviation tracks a tornadic thunderstorm.

00:12 – Following a visual tornado sighting, Universal Weather initiates a remote ENTOUCH alarm with a detailed description of location and movement.

00:15 – ENTOUCH server located at the Network Operating Center receives and processes the alarm, calculates the notification list based on geographical (GIS) coordinates.

00:31 – 11 schools in the storm's path receive the detailed specific information via a wireless warning sign in the administration office of each school.

00:41 – Nine local government agencies, including public safety organizations, are warned via pagers, dial up telephones, fax and two-way radio broadcasts.

00:51 – 26 restaurants, malls and other public areas are notified by wireless signs and radio broadcasts.

17:00 – NOAA broadcasts a tornado warning weather emergency for four counties followed by the four-day forecast.

Updates continue to stream to all above sites every minute until the emergency is over. 16,200 people are notified within one minute of alarm trigger by the ENTOUCH Network Operations Center.

Why can't we communicate?

Different agencies, different providers, different systems – interoperability provides the key to successful emergency management, linking disparate networks and systems. The ENTOUCH network builds a bridge to unify the compatibility of existing systems, allowing many different agencies with unlike equipment the ability to communicate and coordinate resources to ensure public safety – as well as asset protection – during crisis moments.

IWS is dedicated to helping its clients achieve their individual and organizational goals by enabling them to make crucial real-time decisions more effectively. IWS systems help clients integrate and streamline their operations, enhancing productivity and protecting themselves, the community and the environment from potential hazards. ■