DISASTER RESOURCE
GUIDE

CRITICAL ISSUES IN
CRISIS COMMUNICATION

SPONSORED BY

ONSOLVE™

DISASTER RESOURCE
GUIDE

■ CRITICAL ISSUES IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

On the Web Visit our online platform for more on this subject. **www.RiskAndResilienceHUB.com**
Crisis & Emergency Management • Disaster Recovery • Business Continuity • Homeland Security

SPECIAL EDITION:
CRITICAL ISSUES IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

This publication is a Special Edition of the Disaster Resource GUIDE, focusing on some of the critical issues in crisis communications. In our broadband world of instant communication, we must address the important topic of communicating ACCURATE information in a TIMELY way, and collecting back affirmative receipts or updates. As business continuity professionals, we must address these issues and help our colleagues prepare.

This edition starts with a review of inclement weather events and the communications issues that arise. The author, Amanda Cupp, offers valuable insights based on real-world examples of recent hurricanes and other weather disasters. According to recent research, we can expect these events to increase in both frequency and severity in future years.

Another issue faced by BC professionals is getting employee and C-Suite buy-in for any communication system needed. It is essential to have up to date contact information and full participation of employees and stakeholders in order for the notification system to reach its full potential. Read these seven secrets to getting employee buy-in.

Some organizations would like to use readily available, and free, instant messaging apps which have become so popular. However there are real pitfalls of using these systems. Don't make the mistakes others are making. Compliance risks could make this approach very expensive.

These articles by industry experts can help you review this important issue of crisis communication. And we offer a special thanks to OnSolve, the sponsor of this edition of the GUIDE.

The GUIDE has been published since 1996! We have been the industry's "one stop" resource for business continuity and disaster preparedness, and our Continuity eGUIDE was the industry's first newsletter. Please check out our new platform, the Risk and Resilience HUB! We believe our industry needs this virtual community now more than ever.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, our readers, and I always welcome any feedback or suggestions you might have.

Let me hear from you via email, publisher@disaster-resource.com

Kathy Gannon Rainey
Publisher
Disaster Resource GUIDE
Continuity eGUIDE
Publisher@Disaster-Resource.com

The Disaster Resource GUIDE

The Disaster Resource GUIDE has been published since 1996! While many of the specific issues have changed over the years, our overall mission has remained the same: to help businesses, schools, institutions and all types of government entities assess risks, mitigate and prepare for any type of disruption...and recover as quickly as possible after an event.
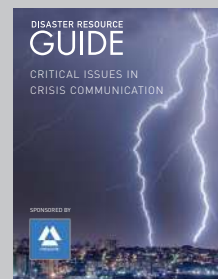
eGUIDE

The Continuity eGUIDE is a Wednesday newsletter which provides a concise snapshot of the business continuity and emergency management industry. The popular "Meet the Experts" column includes thought leadership pieces from industry leaders around the world.

Risk and Resilance HUB

The Risk and Resilience HUB is a digital platform leveraged to bring together the silos of business continuity, crisis management, emergency management, disaster recovery, and GRC (Governance, Risk Management and Compliance Management). Join in and gain from the experiences of others, while contributing your expertise to the community.

www.RiskAndResilienceHUB.com

HOW TO COMMUNICATE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER INCLEMENT WEATHER

YOUR ALL-IN-ONE GUIDE TO BUSINESS CONTINTUITY

BY AMANDA CUPP

When an announcement goes out that inclement weather has closed roads, schools and businesses, including yours, your crisis communications plan should already be activated and in motion. If a weather-related incident or other critical event occurs, it's too late to decide what needs to be done and to spend valuable time making decisions that you could have anticipated.

Use this guide to steer crisis communications before, during and after an inclement weather emergency so that you can keep your employees safe and your stakeholders informed and help guide your business back to normal as smoothly as possible.

Don't wait for a storm to hit

Having a plan to address inclement weather is one of your most important communications strategies. Severe weather is the leading business continuity concern and it can bring a business to its knees, especially if adequate preparation is not in place. Depending on their length and severity, weather events such as blizzards, hailstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, mudslides, landslides and wildfires can cause power outages, unsafe conditions, logistical challenges, loss of sales and property damage, in addition to reducing employee morale and productivity.

Such events are also very expensive. According to a new report by the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. weather events in 2017 cost a record $300+ billion. And extreme weather is only increasing, thanks to climate change.

And yet, according to a 2017 survey from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and MetLife, a majority of small businesses have no emergency plans in place in case of natural disaster or severe weather. While larger businesses often have business continuity and disaster recovery plans, many of them don't account specifically for weather-related events.

Such startling facts undoubtedly extend to business communications, with too many businesses waiting to create a proper crisis communications plan until they've experienced a crisis. Don't put your organization in that position. Ensure that you have a proper plan in place now.

Emergency notifications ensure continuity

One of the most important pieces of your crisis plan is an Emergency Notification System (ENS), which provides efficient, accurate communication for organizations of every size. With an ENS, you have the ability to provide multiple, targeted messages to various employee and stakeholder groups precisely when you need to, using multiple channels. On top of that, it permits two-way communication, so you know who is safe and who may not be.

Consider this use case: Air Liquide, a world leader in gases for industry, health and the environment, has facilities on the U.S. Gulf Coast that experience repeated disruptions due to hurricanes and other dramatic weather. The company needs to be able to alert employees about hurricanes and other interruptions to ensure their safety and direct them in case of a change of work venue. It also needs a system that is part of ongoing communications to more than 200 customers along its pipeline system.

For years, Air Liquide employees called clients one by one to notify them of looming events, a process that could take more than two hours to complete. Critical messages about a loss of power were a challenge to deliver in a timely manner, with no guarantee that customers actually received voicemails. And, the process did not ensure that those most affected would be called first.

Now, using an ENS, Air Liquide's key stakeholders receive notifications within minutes of an event, and the company is assured that messages are both delivered and received. Air Liquide can stay in constant contact with employees and stakeholders during foul weather and other business disruptions, regardless of their locations.

An ENS provides reliable, accurate communication when you and your stakeholders need it most. No matter where you are, you can send text, voice, email and other emergency alerts to recipients within moments. Just as important, you can get word back to determine crucial next steps, or to assess whether people are safe and out of danger.

Take advantage of ENS versatility

When you use an ENS as part of a communications plan, you are giving your organization the very best chance of recovering from an inclement weather incident as quickly as possible. Systems are versatile and can be customized, with features that include the following:

- During a disaster such as a hurricane, some channels might be down or overloaded, but it is highly unlikely that all of them will be unavailable at once. Your ENS system can send alerts through multiple channels, increasing the odds that your message gets to key stakeholders, including customers.
- You can build custom recipient groups so that the right stakeholders receive the appropriate messages. Or, you can consolidate communications lists so that every stakeholder receives the same information at the same time, avoiding confusing multiple message chains.

- An ENS provides time-saving pre-defined scenarios aligned with your emergency communications plan. Prepared message templates are ready to go when you need them, so you waste no time activating your disaster response (keep reading for more information about templates). You can focus on addressing other aspects of the weather emergency at hand.
- With an ENS, you can target groups of employees, customers or suppliers in specific geographic areas. This is especially applicable in weather-related emergencies, where the severity of warnings or expected impact may differ depending on the area. The most effective systems can interpret National Weather Service bulletins to geographically target only those in the path of the weather event. They can automatically plot contact addresses on a map, allowing administrators to choose specific areas they want to include or exclude from an alert or notification.
- An ENS can provide you with two-way communications, another critical aspect of personal safety. It can help you check that people are safe; an effective system should be able to collect responses and report the results, so your emergency team can tally who still needs to be contacted.

When you incorporate the reliability and speed of an ENS into your crisis communications plan, you help ensure business continuity in a very real way, and you boost stakeholders' confidence, because they learn to count on and trust you. It's a win-win solution in a difficult situation.

Plan before you have to act

No matter what kind of communications system you use, here are several steps you can take to build the foundation of an effective emergency plan. Review them before inclement weather hits your business:

- Create internal emergency-response teams, identifying the roles of everyone on the team and what their roles are during weather-related emergencies. Be sure to include IT representatives on the team.
- Train key employees on technology to mobilize crisis-response teams quickly, alert staff and suppliers, and account for personnel safety.
- Implement HR policies for employee notification, remote-work policies, information and ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Create and distribute shelter-in-place, evacuation and medical emergency procedures.
- Keep a current list of contact information for all response-team personnel, employees, utility companies, FEMA, the local Red Cross chapter and local first responder organizations.
- Build and maintain off-site support for business continuity.

Once you have an emergency plan framework in place, you can spend time honing it to ensure its effectiveness. Here are some pointers you can use before you have a crisis—the more thoroughly you address some of these areas, the more effectively you can respond when an event starts to unfold:

- Put your cybersecurity measures in place, such as backing up records. If you are not already using cloud storage, think about it. Are you ready to respond if a weather incident takes down your IT systems?
- Encourage all your stakeholders, including employees and residents, to register for the notifications you'll send. You can reach only people for whom you have information. Regularly request that stakeholders check and update their contact information. This helps ensure reliable, speedy delivery of messages at the right time, to the right person, on the right device.
- Think about your specific needs. You know your organization and community best. For instance, the more quickly word gets out about a wildfire, the better the chance of

swiftly managing it. A good disaster preparedness strategy includes actionable plans for safety and considers unique characteristics of your area, like the landscape.

- Educate your employees. Train the right people on how to use your notification system, including how to respond appropriately. Organizations that educate employees get significantly greater response rates – which is what you want when checking on the safety of your employees.
- Test your plan and system. Many organizations test as often as twice a month to make sure that employees and stakeholders are familiar with the system – what messages look like, what information they contain, and so on -- and that contact data is current. Conduct tests during normal business hours and address any glitches to be sure it will work when you need it. Also, conduct drills for different types of weather events.
- Learn from experience. If your organization has experienced a crisis, review what took place, then adapt and update your plan, based on lessons learned.

Message templates to use before a storm breaks

As we've mentioned, pre-incident planning involves creating or reviewing message templates for your mass notification system. Use templates to create messages that address every phase of a weather event, so that you are not spending valuable time trying to craft a message during a crisis. Long before a hurricane makes landfall, for example, you need to start sending out emergency notifications. Such pre-storm warnings are critical to the safety and security of your employees. These are template message examples you can input into your customizable emergency notification system:

- A hurricane has been forecasted to impact [CITY, STATE] on [FORE-CASTED DATES OF STORM]. Please work with your manager on alternative working arrangements.
- We are in the path of [STORM NAME]. Stay alert to emergency messages regarding evacuations, office closures and relevant instructions.

The goal is to provide information regarding business continuity. Since you are not sure about the severity of the storm, the preparatory plan should be to keep your business running while protecting your employees.

Your plan should identify specific resources and procedures necessary to respond to different types of weather-related disasters, as they often require different types of preparedness and response. Long before a tornado, hurricane or blizzard watch or warning becomes imminent, devise communication strategies aimed at making sure people get the essential information they need when they need it.

For example, consider snowstorms and blizzards. Heavy snow or ice can result in loss of power or water and an inability to travel to and from work, but such conditions rarely come without warning. The National Weather Service issues four types of alerts similar to the alerts issued for hurricanes – winter weather advisory, winter storm watch, winter storm warning and blizzard warning – and you can plan actions based on every type of alert, at every stage of the storm.

On the other hand, you might have just a few minutes of warning when it comes to a wildfire. While fire sirens don't tell you what to do in an emergency, timely, prerecorded, optimal emergency notification systems can, and do.

What to say during an inclement weather crisis

Once severe weather has hit, you should switch your focus to communicating in a slightly different way. For example, you will now want to communicate with employees remotely, because many, if not all, of them will be at home. In addition, you need to have a plan to provide emergency support for affected employees.

Remember, you cannot predict exactly what will happen, including the force and effects of the weather, so you need to have plans in place that can address what you expect, with flexibility to respond to what takes place.

You will want to send messages that include updates about the severity of the storm and how long your business will remain closed. In addition, remind your employees and other stakeholders to follow local weather safety alerts to ensure that they are protected from severe weather. You may also send messages that inform employees how to receive assistance during their time of need.

You will also need to craft messages and strategies that fit your business. Perhaps your organization has remote employees worldwide. In that case, you can include special messages to them about how much of business as usual they can expect to conduct. What's vital is that you sustain communication at every stage of an incident.

Your ENS provider can tailor systems to your needs. For instance, during Hurricane Irma, one company used a custom program to post audio bulletin board messages for employees, who could phone in for important information.

Emergency notifications In action

Examples of how companies have used custom messaging during hurricane season:

- Evacuations – Due to Irma's size, many companies evacuated their islands or other locations. Notifications tracked employees, asking them whether they were still in Miami or whether they had left. A Tampa-based company used the system to track employee accountability.
- Shelter Information – Several organizations launched alerts about open shelters, emphasizing that the shelters were pet-friendly. This is a key example of how an organization can show their stakeholders and their families empathy and concern while providing useful details about the disaster.

> Your plan should identify specific resources and procedures necessary to respond to different types of weather-related disasters, as they often require different types of preparedness and response. Long before a tornado, hurricane or blizzard watch or warning becomes imminent, devise communication strategies aimed at making sure people get the essential information they need when they need it.

- Power Outages/Updates – After Irma hit, stakeholders became restless about when they'd have power back. Several communities and organizations launched alerts about power outages and updates.
- Flooding – For multiple counties in Florida, flooding was a huge issue. An ENS can inform their stakeholders about its scale and locations, along with appropriate actions.

Message templates to use during a storm

During a storm, you may very well be keeping in contact with stakeholders remotely. In addition, you must have a plan to provide emergency support for affected employees. Message templates that can be useful during a hurricane include:

- [NAME OF OFFICE] will remain closed until [DATE, TIME] due to the destruction caused by [NAME OF HURRICANE]. Please follow local weather safety alerts to ensure you are protected from severe weather.

- If you are affected by [NAME OF HURRICANE], please contact [PERSON OF INTEREST] to find out how to receive assistance during this time of need.

If your business is affected by a hurricane or other inclement weather, it's likely your employees are too. As such, be sensitive to their situation as you work to continue business functions. Your consideration and concern can help them recover more quickly.

Communications to help speed recovery

Even though a storm or other weather incident may have ended, and your communications plan worked, the real challenge can begin in the recovery process, as you keep an eye on getting the doors open and operations up and running again.

Your communication plan should outline procedures not only for recovery, but also for follow-up. For example, mop-up operations after a fire has been extinguished or a hurricane has passed

can take weeks. Some employees may not have power at their homes or may have lost their homes. Communicate about what they should do about resuming work and remind them of available services.

Let's look again at some real examples after Hurricane Irma:

- Storm Debris/Pick Up – Continuing communication in the aftermath of a hurricane or any major weather incident is key to a successful response effort. After Irma, organizations used ENS messaging to launch alerts for scheduled storm debris pickups, again providing stakeholders with key information.
- Re-Entry – updates can be launched about the evacuation of and re-entry to cities, helping stakeholders stay safe and informed.
- Restoration Efforts – To help residents and employees get back home and back to work safely, notification systems launched messages about efforts to restore neighborhoods and business locations.

Your mission at this point is to provide services to resume productivity. However, you must remain empathetic to the needs of your employees who may have suffered serious losses both professionally and personally. Fortunately, you can do both with the use of message alerts.

Message templates for post-storm recovery

For your business, your main goal is to resume operations as quickly as possible. To help do this effectively, you can implement the following message templates into your emergency notification system:

- Due to [NAME OF HURRICANE], our office is closed. Contact [MANAGER OF DEPARTMENT] for information about working remotely and when to return to the office.
- If you are unable to travel to the office, please contact [MANAGER OR PERSONNEL] to discuss alternative working arrangements.
- If you require assistance with maintenance, repairs or tech damage in your office, please reach [MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT] to schedule repairs.

Maintain effective communication to refocus

Once your organization has resumed normal operations and most of the incident has been resolved, your communications can shift to final updates that help refocus everyone on productivity. You should also spend time evaluating your plan's effectiveness.

You can use these tips:

- Gather your team to review what worked and what didn't – because odds are good that some aspects of your plan could be strengthened, while other parts functioned perfectly.
- Make plans now on what you will do differently next time, whether or not it's the same kind of critical incident. Perhaps you experienced a hurricane, but what you learned could extend to any kind of emergency, including a cybercrime.
- Test your revised plan, incorporating any updates you made. If changes were made to policies or procedures

in response to the weather incident you just navigated, be sure to communicate those changes clearly and frequently.

Strong crisis planning means strong recovery

You may be familiar with the startling statistic that approximately 40 to 60 percent of small businesses never recover from a disaster. If they are to recover, those businesses need to resume operations within five days. Just five days. Think about how quickly those days pass if you are scurrying to figure out how to recover from a major weather incident.

If you have a plan in place, you will save time and give your organization the best chance of surviving a weather emergency or some other form of crisis, and your business will become operational quickly.

The strength of your crisis planning determines how quickly your organization reopens its doors and gets back to business. Don't wait. Be sure your crisis communications plan is as strong as it can be, ready to steer you through any kind of storm.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Cupp can be reached at amanda.cupp@onsolve.com.

SEVEN SECRETS TO GETTING EMPLOYEE BUY-IN
(AND PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION) FOR AN EMERGENCY NOTIFICATOIN PROGRAM

BY ANN PICKREN

As a business continuity and resiliency professional, you understand the importance of having a solid, multimodal communication system in place. However, some employees in your organization may be reluctant to fully commit, particularly when it comes to voluntarily submitting personal contact information.

Their hesitancy is understandable. There's so much in the news today about privacy and information collection (think NSA) that we are more reluctant than ever to freely give away our personal information. Also, time away from work is precious —it's ours, so many in your organization want to keep their personal life personal, and that means not sharing home phone

numbers and Gmail addresses. But for emergency communication to be wholly effective, you have to be able to reach people after business hours.

With this is mind, here are seven secrets to help you garner buy-in for voluntary participation in an emergency notification program:

1 Education is the key. Demonstrate what emergency notification is and what it can do for your organization. Leading vendors provide free demos and webinars covering everything from service features to industry best practices. Invite department heads or team leaders to one of these sessions so they can share what they learn with their employees. This is also where security comes in. Make sure those you are educating know their information is safe because you've invested in the most secure emergency notification service on the market.

2 Skip the fear factor. Avoid using fear of a crisis as a motivating factor because it's not sustainable. Instead let your message be one of inclusion; "We do not want anyone to be left out of the loop during an event that impacts all of us." Employees generally want to know what's happening in their workplace, so creating this vibe is a good morale booster. Informed employees are happy employees and will be more willing to participate in new programs without (as much) complaint.

3 Keep it simple. A good emergency notification system has numerous methods for collecting contact information. To make things even easier, look for a mass notification service that provides a self-registration or self-update feature. This enables your alert recipients to add/update contact information that may not be available in your HR system (e.g., personal email), or that has changed over time. You can simply schedule an email, maybe quarterly, to be sent to everyone in your organization asking them to log in to the registration site and update their information.

4 Create a new culture. It may be a cliché, but make it part of your culture. Encourage your organization's leaders to openly participate and support the program. If the CEO is the first in line to register her contact information, then others may follow suit. Advertise that emergency communication is here to stay (post flyers, include information in a newsletter, discuss it in department meetings). Let the idea sink in that a new way of doing things is coming and will benefit everyone.

5 Set and meet expectations. Be clear on what the notification program is for (just emergencies, routine updates, etc.) and who will receive alerts (maybe only the IT team will receive routine messages, and everyone else will receive emergency notifications). With expectations clearly set, your organization should adapt quickly.

6 Incentivize. It's amazing what we'll do for a reward. If you want people to sign up and share their personal information then give them a reason to do it. An extra casual "Friday," a free lunch at a company picnic, and logo giveaways are affordable offerings that may net great results.

7 Make it unavoidable. Even if you can't get the buy-in you want, you can still protect your organization. Good notification vendors offer more than just phone and email notifications. Things like desktop alerts, IP desk phone alerts, API integrations with digital signage or speaker systems, etc., can enhance your emergency communication plan. These types of alerts are intrusive and hard to miss. So even if Steve in accounting keeps opting out of SMS notifications, he will still see an emergency popup alert on his computer screen.

Hopefully some of these tips will help you spread your passion for business resilience within your organization. A little knowledge and motivation can go a long way in getting you to the next step in your emergency communication plan.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Pickren has spent 20+ years in the Business Continuity and Crisis Communications field, having held positions at Comdisco and SunGard for over 16 years. Ann currently serves as the President for OnSolve, LLC. Ann's expertise spans all business continuity lifecycle services. She currently holds her MBCI certification and is a member of the DRJ Executive Council, a past board member of the BCI USA Chapter, past President and board member of the Atlanta ACP Chapter. She can be reached at Ann.pickren@onsolve.com .

Natural Hazards Center

The Natural Hazards Center, based at the University of Colorado, Boulder, is the federal government's clearinghouse for information and resources to address issues related to natural disasters. It has been designated by the National Science Foundation as the organization to assist communities assess risk, mitigate where possible, prepare for and recover from natural disasters.

The Center was founded over 40 years ago after the Assessment of Natural Hazards Research in the United States recommended establishing a clearinghouse to compile, translate, and share information, as well as connect the academic hazards research, emergency management, and policy communities. In 1976, Gilbert White and his wife, Anne, along with a small group of committed staff and students, at the University of Colorado Boulder, began what is today's Natural Hazards Center.

Their objectives include: (1) translating and sharing hazards and disaster research and information; (2) building connections between researchers, non-profit and private sector professionals, the media, policy makers, and local, state, and federal officials; (3) advancing social science and interdisciplinary knowledge, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable populations and places; and (4) training and mentoring the diverse next generation of hazards and disaster professionals. These valuable resources, and more about the Center, can be found on their website: hazards.colorado.edu.

WHY YOU SHOULD AVOID INSTANT MESSAGING SERVICES

FOR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

BY AMANDA CUPP

To reduce costs, businesses around the world are turning to free apps for texting and instant messaging. These programs do serve the purpose of communicating in real-time. Yet, there are grave concerns when organizations turn to these apps and programs for their emergency notifications.

By choosing a "free" app to provide communications during an emergency, organizations may be at risk of noncompliance with federal and international regulations. This article explains how your organization may be in jeopardy when using these types of services for communicating with the public or internal teams in a crisis.

Lack of Monitoring and Recording

While instant messaging services are typically free and universally recognized, such apps and platforms come with a high cost of risk to the target audience. For starters, organizations that use these services cannot track and record which individuals have read emergency notification messages. Furthermore, there is no way for message recipients to organize the information they do receive.

Without a way to monitor message deliveries, organizations don't have valid documentation for auditing purposes. As a result, there isn't a way to evaluate the success of the notification plan and make necessary improvements. Given the ever-changing regulatory landscape and the need to provide valid and successful notifications in a crisis scenario,

documentation is critical. These apps and instant messenger programs aren't capable of providing important feedback on delivery results

Security Risks

The last thing an organization needs during an emergency is to have their communication channels hacked or compromised. When using an instant messaging service, there are major security concerns. Most apps and programs do not offer organizations the ability to conduct and control penetration or other types of security tests. For organizations that are focused on providing communications during an emergency, testing and evaluation are an essential element of the response strategy.

Finding The Right Service

While instant messaging platforms and texting apps serve a purpose, these services are not up to par for today's complex organizations. Certain countries, such as the UK, are prohibiting the use of such services in the business environment. Simply put, as noted by the Information Commissioner's Office that oversees the General Data Protection Regulation, the use of these services for professional communications is in violation of EU data protection. The EU crackdown could be just the beginning, with the US and other leading nations pushing for better security of communication networks. One way that your organization can forgo this security risk and improve your emergency notifications is to choose the best service designed for emergency notifications.

Be sure any solution you implement provides fully encrypted communication for end-to-end text communication. Look for a platform that provides geo-tracking and an encrypted lockbox for file sharing. Also be sure the system is designed for the tracking, monitoring, and auditing of message deliveries.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Cupp can be reached at amanda.cupp@onsolve.com.

Cyber Readiness Institute

Certainly one of the most damaging incidents that can impact a company is a cybersecurity breach. While Fortune 500 companies have entire departments dedicated to cybersecurity for the enterprise, small and medium businesses are woefully lacking in cyber preparedness.

The consequences of a cyber breach can be serious, costing you money, reputation, and loss of trust. As our world becomes more connected and an organization's value is increasingly tied to its data, all organizations must be cyber ready. Cyber readiness focuses on the preventative measures you can take, as well as the actions to be taken when an incident does occur. Creating a culture of cyber readiness means creating a resilient organization.

Your cyber readiness matters to your customers, your suppliers, and every organization that you touch in your value chain. The free Cyber Readiness Program provides the knowledge, expertise, and resources to help you build a resilient and cyber ready organization.

The Cyber Readiness Institute brings together experts, including senior executives from global companies, to share best practices and expertise. CRI distills this knowledge to develop practical tools and resources that make cyber readiness accessible to small and medium-sized organizations throughout the world. Based on the expert input, the free Cyber Readiness Program focuses on today's critical cyber issues: Authentication, Patching, Phishing, and USBs. The program also includes guidance for going to the cloud and implementing a practical cyber incident response plan.

Find out more about this new institute by visiting the website at:

https://www.cyberreadinessinstitute.org/.

THE TRUE COST OF WAITING:
HOW NOT HAVING AN EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM HURTS BUSINESSES

BY ANN PICKREN

Imagine an emergency unfolded near your business this morning, and you needed to reach all of your employees—but you couldn't contact them effectively or quickly. Not long ago, during a different emergency, neither could a New Hampshire hospital.

A masked man showed up at the hospital, carrying a concealed rifle. The hospital went into emergency-response mode and manually tried to notify over 2,000 people. After several hours, it had only reached 160. Fast forward a few months. A fleeing suspect shoots two police officers near the same hospital. The security director was able to use an emergency notification system to launch an active threat scenario to communicate that the hospital was on lockdown. Then, he used the system to pull together the disaster-response team. This time, the hospital successfully delivered notifications to all contacts at each step of the emergency, saving time, money and, possibly lives.

Optimism Prevails

Unfortunately, that hospital's preparation is the exception. Most of the time, organizations either don't prepare for threats, or their preparations don't live up to the task. And there's a very human reason why.

According to psychologist and researcher Douglas Paton, a prime reason people don't do better preparing for emergency scenarios is because they are "unrealistically optimistic." Disaster preparedness professionals know they need to strengthen their business resiliency with emergency notification systems, but they delay doing so because they only think they'll use it in the case of a full-blown emergency. And, let's face it, disasters happen to other people, not us.

Interestingly, the same optimism also exists for more benign emergencies, like broken water pipes. When the owner of a daycare center arrived at her facility on a Monday morning and discovered massive flooding caused by a burst water pipe, all she could do was wish she had a quick, easy way to notify parents.

You Won't Know You Need a Plan Until It's Too Late

Take severe weather events. They're on the rise, and no region is immune. Because of these, businesses often need a way to notify employees and stakeholders to stay away from worksites until conditions improve. There are also multiple types of indirect threats to organizations that quickly disrupt operations. But countless examples show that preparation makes a big difference in recovery during the aftermath.

The 2015 San Bernardino shooting left people dead and mass confusion in its wake. By the day after the incident, residents didn't know whether schools were open or closed. One school worked to quickly set up its emergency notification system. With a tech's assistance, they exported contacts from the school's database and imported them into an emergency notification system. That enabled the school's status notifications to go out to 3,600 families and helped keep the community informed while reducing chaos.

Your Organization Is Banking On You to Have a Plan

There are also systemic reasons for disaster preparedness and business resiliency professionals to put an emergency notification system in place sooner rather than later. The organization's emergency responses will fall short without the sense of urgency born from preparedness. In research, Paton found that people will subconsciously transfer perceived risks to "emergency services and agencies they trust to do all the necessary work." The rank-and-file won't take preparing more seriously unless they've actively engaged with others in discussions on the risks they face. Without feelings of shared fate, people assume the worst case scenario is always going to happen to someone else. To overcome complacency, conversations surrounding readiness should focus on both business and employee expectations related to emergency and disaster responses. Key questions you must address include notifications, safety, security, pay, and benefits.

Emergencies + Rumors = Big Problems

Nothing sows seeds of uncertainty like employees posting misinformation on social media.

Rumors and innuendo can snowball as people make incorrect assumptions. In emergency situations, if not all employees are receiving effective notifications, these rumors can spiral out of control. In these situations, missing and incorrect information makes the rounds because the right information doesn't. Even if untruth spreads because of a malicious employee, if all workers are receiving precise information, the lie dies a quick death.
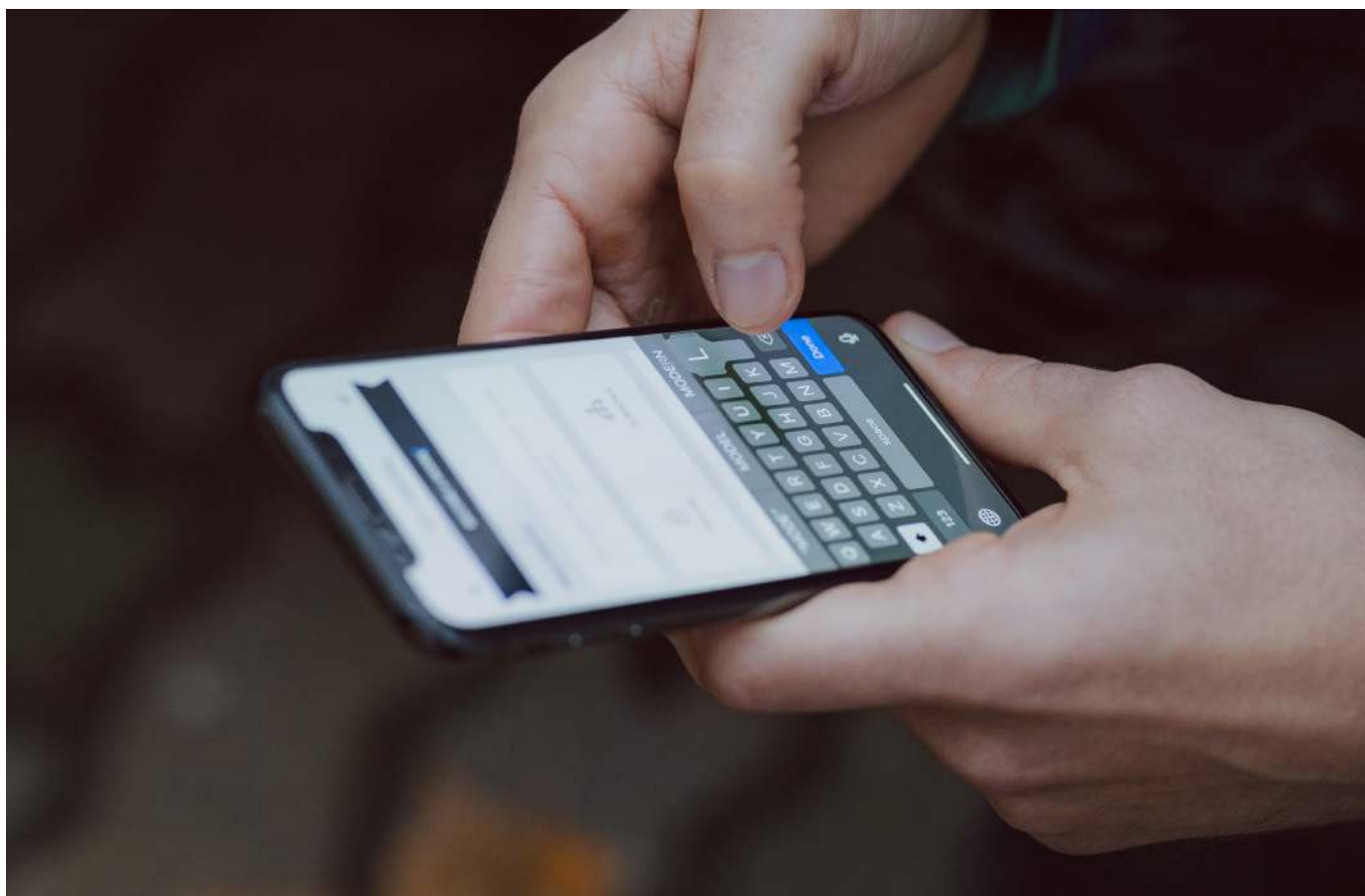
How much time and effort will you use to overcome the negative consequences of people having the wrong information, or not having the information at all? As Sarah Green Carmichael wrote in the Harvard Business Review, "it's so essential to have a plan for emergencies ahead of time: to cover the fact that, in the moment, you probably won't be thinking clearly."

And without reliable, targeted and full-coverage communication, you will face disadvantages in all aspects of emergency and disaster response. The safest choice is always to have a dedicated emergency notification system at the ready.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Pickren has spent 20+ years in the Business Continuity and Crisis Communications field, having held positions at Comdisco and SunGard for over 16 years. Ann currently serves as the President for OnSolve, LLC. Ann's expertise spans all business continuity lifecycle services. She currently holds her MBCI certification and is a member of the DRJ Executive Council, a past board member of the BCI USA Chapter, past President and board member of the Atlanta ACP Chapter. She can be reached at Ann.pickren@onsolve.com .

An

Informed

Employee

is a Safe

Employee

**Critical Alerts for
Today's Uncertain World.**

After an emergency, ensuring continuity is mission-critical.
Keeping lines of communication open and clear is the
first step to providing clarity during a critical event. Let
OnSolve's mass notification solution go to work for you.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT ONSOLVE.COM.

ONSOLVE™