



Emergency managers prepare for hurricane season by planning evacuation routes, mapping surge zones, organizing shelter operations, and updating policies and procedures.

But how much attention is given to your mass notification system that will be heavily called upon when disaster strikes? Take a few minutes to look over your system now so it will be ready when you need it.

Hurricane Season System Check

Registration portal

- Make sure your registration portal is an easy to find location on your website. Do you have a link to it on several key agency web pages? Many people will visit your website for services other than emergency services, by identifying your registration portal on all agency web pages, you increase the potential for citizens to register.
- Allow citizens to subscribe to alerts that are non-emergency. Providing citizens with the ability to sign up for other important

but non-emergency alerts can increase your opt in subscribers.

- Require certain contact information such as a location(s) or multiple contact points to increase the ability to notify the subscriber in the event they're not near their primary contact point.

Multi-lingual registration and notifications

- Make sure your registration portal can easily be viewed in multiple languages. Having this capability will help those whose first

language isn't English understand how to quickly register for alerts.

- Allow citizens to declare the language they would like to receive the message in. This will increase the likelihood they will listen and adhere to your notification.

Pre-scripted templates

- Pre-script as many of your messages into templates as you can. Having pre-scripted templates allows for messages to be pre-approved, speeding up and reducing errors in messaging.

- Pre-scripted messages allow for token variables to be placed in at the time of notification.

Weather alerts

- Weather can change in seconds, so make sure you have automated weather alerts. Select the alerts that are most relevant to your area, so citizens sign up for just the ones they want.
- Weather events that pose dangerous life-safety concerns can be fast moving and cause extensive damage. Require that high severity weather alerts are sent out to all citizens
- Provide users the ability to set a do not disturb period, but ensure it can be overridden in the case of high severity events that threaten life safety.
- Speak with your local NWS to gain a better understanding of how your weather messages will be sent from the local office. Will they use extensions, continued, or just new for issuing weather alerts? A partnership with the NWS will benefit your weather alerting strategy.

Settings

- In today's "robo calling" world, make sure your caller ID is

well known known by citizens so when they receive that emergency call, they'll answer it.

- Give your citizens a way to confirm they've received the message. This will provide you the confidence your messages are being received.
- Have a proven way to effectively throttle phone calls as to not overload local phone switches. Make sure you can adjust and control them to maximize your calling capability.
- Add social media publishing options to your system. Studies show leveraging your social media networks helps reach a larger audience.
- Test your IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert Warning System) system monthly to make sure your IPAWS credentials are properly working in your system.

Contact data

- Make sure your citizen contact data has been updated in your system. Check with your system provider to inquire if they can provide any publicly available landline and VoIP data or if they have access to wireless data.

- Update your internal staff contacts. Have people retired, moved on and need to be removed from your system? If possible, establish automated data transmissions to your system.
- Test your data to make sure numbers are valid, email addresses are current and duplicate information has been removed. Cleaning your data will help maximize the efficiency of your system.

GIS capabilities

- Load your evacuation zones to make it easier to contact people should an evacuation be called for, and make sure you keep these updated if changes are made.
- Add surge zones into your system to be able to notify people who may be affected.
- Add critical infrastructure sites with an established notification zone, so notifications can be sent in the event they are compromised.