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Tornado season preparedness guide

Helping emergency managers keep people safe and organizations running

Successful tornado preparedness is of paramount importance for emergency managers.

As professionals responsible for the safety and well-being of their communities, emergency managers play a critical role in mitigating the risks associated with tornadoes. By implementing effective preparedness measures, they can minimize the potential loss of life and property damage caused by these devastating natural disasters.

In this guide, we will cover the three primary reasons why tornado preparedness is vital for the success of emergency managers. Additionally, we will provide a system checklist so emergency managers can ensure their emergency notification system is ready when they need it most.

Everbridge is here to help keep your people safe and your businesses running, faster.

If you'd like to learn more about how Everbridge can help your organization with compliance and critical event management, **visit our website** and **schedule a demo**.

Three reasons why tornado preparedness is crucial

01   Timely and effective communication

Tornadoes are sudden and fast-moving disasters that can cause significant damage and pose a threat to human lives. By preparing the emergency notification system, emergency managers can ensure timely and effective communication with the affected population. This allows them to issue warnings, instructions, and updates promptly, helping people take appropriate actions to protect themselves. A well-prepared notification system can reach a large number of individuals quickly, potentially saving lives and minimizing injuries.

02   Broad reach and accessibility

Tornadoes can impact a wide area, often affecting multiple communities or even entire regions. An emergency notification system allows emergency managers to reach a broad audience, including residents, businesses, schools, and other organizations within the tornado's path. By utilizing various communication channels such as text messages, phone calls, sirens, social media alerts, and media broadcasts, emergency managers can ensure the message reaches as many people as possible. This inclusivity helps ensure that individuals with different communication preferences or accessibility needs receive the vital information they need to stay safe during a tornado.

03   Preparedness and community resilience

Preparing the emergency notification system demonstrates a commitment to preparedness and community resilience. By actively testing, updating, and maintaining the notification system, emergency managers can identify any potential issues or gaps in communication before a tornado strikes. Regular drills and exercises involving the notification system can help raise awareness among the public about tornado safety and the importance of being prepared. When communities see emergency managers actively working on improving the notification system, it fosters trust and confidence in their ability to handle emergencies effectively, leading to a more resilient community response during tornado events.

Tornado season system checklist

The public needs to understand what to do in the event of a tornado and be able to receive important direction from their local public alerting authority. Emergency managers play a critical role in assessing severe weather threats and increasing awareness.

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.

Registration portal

- Make sure your registration portal is in 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 the public to register.

- 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.

- Make the portal easy to find
- Have several accessible web page links

Contact data

- Make sure your contact data for the public 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.

- Update your public and internal contacts
- Test and clean data to maximize efficiency

Pre-scripted templates

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

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

- Using templates ensures the visual consistency of communications. This helps the public easily identify your emergency alerts and trust the messages they receive.

- Turn messages into templates to speed up timing and reduce errors

Multi-lingual registration and notifications

- Make sure your registration portal can easily be viewed in multiple languages. Having this capability will help those who don't speak English as their primary language quickly register for alerts.

- Allow people 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.

- Partner with organizations in your community, such as churches and associations, to create a plan to drive awareness, create alerts, share or broadcast alerts in other languages, or assist in reviewing pre-scripted messages in other languages.

- Think of the user experience for people who speak other languages
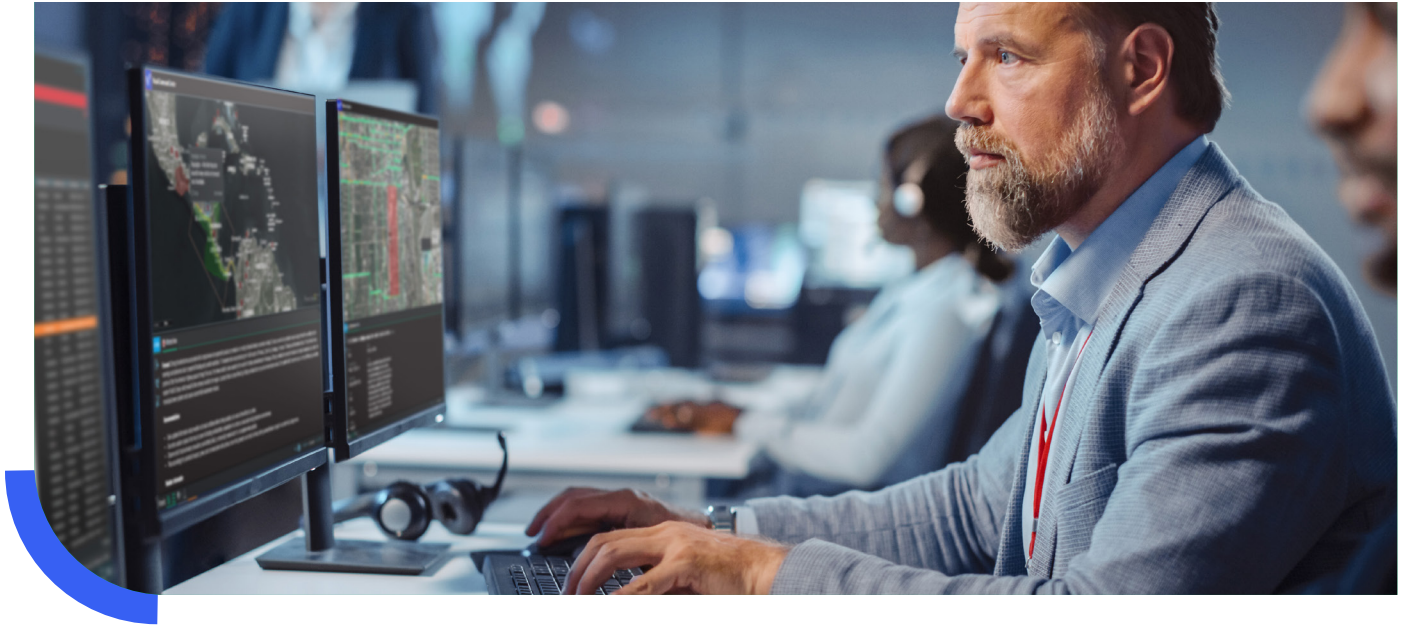
Weather alerts

- Weather can change in seconds, make sure you have automated weather alerts. Select the alerts that are most relevant to your area, so the public sign up for just the ones they want.

- Confirm you have multiple communication channels to ensure broad reach. This includes SMS/text messages, phone calls, email, mobile app notifications, and social media alerts. A diverse range of channels increases accessibility and enables your team to reach individuals through their preferred communication method.

- Allow subscribers the ability to set a quiet period or do not disturb period for their weather alerts that can be overridden for a life safety alert.

- Speak with your local National Weather Service (NWS) representative to gain a better understanding of how your weather messages will be sent from the local office. A partnership with the NWS will benefit your weather alerting strategy.

- Automate your weather alerts

- Ensure a diverse range of communication channels

- Partner with local NWS representative for coordinating strategies

Geographical targeting

- Check to ensure your system can target communications to specific geographical areas that may be affected. This ensures more precise alerts.

- Make sure your system can leverage pre-loaded shape files, polygon-based targeting, and exclude areas as needed.

- Check to see if your system facilitates Points of Interest Mapping (POI). This enables mapping and visualization of points of interest such as hospitals, emergency shelters, government facilities, or critical infrastructure. Emergency managers can then send targeted notifications to individuals or organizations associated with these specific locations during tornado events.

- Confirm whether your system offers geofencing capabilities. This allows emergency managers to create virtual boundaries around specific areas. This enables proximity-based alerting, where notifications are triggered when individuals enter or exit defined geofenced areas. Geofencing helps tailor alerts to specific regions or populations within the affected area, providing targeted and relevant information.

- Confirm targeted communications capabilities for more precise alerting
- Create virtual boundaries with geofencing to target specific areas

Settings

- In today's "robo-calling" world, make sure your caller ID is recognizable 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 an effective way to throttle phone calls so as to not overload local phone switches. Make sure you can adjust and control them to maximize your calling capability.

- Confirm caller ID is recognizable to the public
- Ensure citizens can confirm receipt of messages

To discuss more about how Everbridge can help you prepare for tornado season, visit our site or watch a demo.

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About Everbridge

Everbridge, Inc. (NASDAQ: EVBG) empowers enterprises and government organizations to anticipate, mitigate, respond to, and recover stronger from critical events. In today's unpredictable world, resilient organizations minimize impact to people and operations, absorb stress, and return to productivity faster when deploying critical event management (CEM) technology. Everbridge digitizes organizational resilience by combining intelligent automation with the industry's most comprehensive risk data to Keep People Safe and Organizations Running™.

For more information, visit Everbridge.com, read the company blog, and follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter.