

Guilford County: Achieving Automated, Streamlined Communications with Mass Notification



“There are so many roles that we’ve had to take on throughout the pandemic from pairing with the health department to guide our county through initial COVID response to establishing testing and vaccination centers,” said Baker. “We needed to leverage technologies as much as possible, and really put Everbridge to the test, using the tool in more ways than we ever would’ve thought.”

– Conor Baker, Operations Coordinator, Guilford County

OVERVIEW

Located in Greensboro, North Carolina, Guilford County has a population of 541,299 citizens, making it the third-most populous county in North Carolina. The Guilford County mission is to provide an efficient, effective, and responsive government that meets public needs while maintaining a high-performance workforce that provides exceptional services, supporting a high quality of life and sustainable economic growth.



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Problem: Intensified Operational Needs & Lack of Automation

Through 2020 and into 2021, state and local governments faced many challenges from COVID-19 and vaccinations to civil unrest and severe weather. While COVID-19 itself created unprecedented challenges, one often overlooked facet is how the pandemic intensified other operational issues.

“COVID adds an extra layer of complexity to everything. For instance, opening a shelter for hurricane evacuations is something that we do often and is typically a cut and dry process. However, during the pandemic, we wouldn’t be able to just open a gym to our population – we now need to have the conversation of non-congregate sheltering to keep people distant while also determining how to implement health checks,” said Conor Baker, Operations Coordinator, Guilford County.

When COVID-19 struck, Guilford County, like many others, found that digital transformation changed from being a lofty goal to an immediate necessity. The Emergency Management branch found itself taking on many simultaneous tasks. The adoption of technology was required to keep up with mounting responsibilities.

The County of Guilford required:

- + A comprehensive notification solution that could keep citizens and employees informed before, during and after all events, operational incidents, and emergencies, specifically to aid in vaccine distribution
- + The ability to engage in two-way communications with the public
- + Automated and streamlined alerting capabilities that provide information to the public, employees, and key stakeholders



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Solution: Everbridge Mass Notification

Guilford County selected and deployed Everbridge Mass Notification as their communications platform well before the pandemic, however it proved to be a valuable tool in response to COVID as well. Guilford County made this selection because their previous mass notification platform did not meet all the county's needs. Recognizing the need to enhance communications capabilities, Guilford County contracted with Everbridge to better suit the needs of the county to communicate with its stakeholders and residents. Baker stated the old tool "wasn't user friendly or reliable. Without Mass Notification, our ability to communicate with our population would be severely limited. There is so much value that we find in simply being able to relay information to our community."

The county has experienced concrete value from Everbridge's Mass Notification in the form of **community feedback**.

"The tool has increased both community engagement and feedback simply because we can effectively communicate with our community," said Baker.

Everbridge's Mass Notification allowed for a **streamlined way of communicating** vaccine availability and scheduling.

"When the vaccine rollout first started, getting an appointment was difficult. We created a Nixle keyword for easy opt-ins. We would then publish the appointment schedule publicly online, which would trigger an alert to be sent notifying the opt-ins of when they needed to be online to snag an appointment" explained Baker.

This method helped significantly when it came to **solving community concerns** about the vaccine.

"Offering an opt-in by texting [XYZ] to 888-777 for notifications helped resolved community concern of not knowing when they could get a vaccine appointment and also helped the community feel connected. This was very successful as we had 26,000 Spanish and English opt-ins," said Baker.

Everbridge offered a new way for Guilford to **handle unexpected roadblocks**.

"When an issue came up causing us to have to cancel or move vaccine appointments, we could quickly notify people to reschedule or move to another location that could absorb those appointments," said Baker.

The automation, and well as the Conference Bridge feature, Everbridge provided Guilford resulted in much more **effective and efficient operations**.

Baker explained, "our only way of notifying people without Mass Notification would have been through indirect notifications such as posting to our website and social media. Everbridge was instrumental in notifying people for weather delays and other issues."

Guilford also relied heavily on Everbridge to distribute and manage SitReps to key stakeholders, which has **enhanced the county's productivity while saving countless hours of manual labor**.

"We use Everbridge to distribute and manage situation reports to our key stakeholders on a cadence as often as daily, which allowed us to deliver directly to their inbox... We never imagined handling these reports like this, but Everbridge offered a very convenient way of doing so. This makes consumption much easier and saves a lot of time. If we didn't have a means to notify people internally, it would be a very long process of notifying people manually through a phone call. Everbridge makes this seamless as we already have a template ready to execute," said Baker.



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Moving Beyond COVID-19

When asked about the roadmap forward for Guilford County, Baker explained how the pandemic showed the importance of having a strong public warning/alerting platform with up-to-date messaging templates.

"We now recognize the importance of having pre-scripted templates for all alert types. We're currently executing an assessment to revamp our public warning/alerting system from execution to our messaging templates...We'll be adding templates for WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts) messages because we've used them so frequently in the past year," said Baker.

In addition to strengthening their alerting, Guilford County is working through the introduction of two new organizations to their Everbridge system, one of which is for their Public Health department to perform outreach. The second organization being rolled out is their city water system to allow communication with both customers and employees. The city water is being added in response to a recent precautionary advisory.

Baker stated, "The county had a boil water incident which caused our city water system to reach out with the need for an alert issued to the affected area. This resulted in a great open conversation where we found that utilizing Everbridge was a no-brainer. Seeing as Guilford has a county-wide account, folding in the city water alerts is simple and just makes sense."



ABOUT EVERBRIDGE

Everbridge, Inc. (NASDAQ: EVBG) is a global software company that provides enterprise software applications that automate and accelerate organizations' operational response to critical events in order to Keep People Safe and Organizations Running™. Everbridge serves 8 of the 10 largest U.S. cities, 9 of the 10 largest U.S.-based investment banks, 47 of the 50 busiest North American airports, and 9 of the 10 largest U.S.-based health care providers. Everbridge is based in Boston with additional offices in 25 cities around the globe. For more information visit www.everbridge.com, read the company [blog](#), and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).



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