

# BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY

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EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER



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Ed Reuter  
Bartholomew County

## OVERVIEW

Bartholomew County is one of 92 counties in the state of Indiana. The county covers roughly 409 square miles and lies mostly in the level areas surrounding the East Fork of the White River and its tributaries. Agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism make up the majority of the county’s economy. Over 76,000 people call Bartholomew County home and it ranks as the 20th most populous county in the state.

## PROBLEM

Bartholomew County is susceptible to natural, technological and human-made disasters ranging from tornadoes and severe weather incidents, to missing children cases and everyday emergencies. The public safety department required a more functional solution to enable them to disseminate critical information to key stakeholders and residents efficiently and at a moment’s notice.

## SOLUTION

With Everbridge, Bartholomew County is able to communicate to various county departments, cities, non-profit and nongovernmental organizations and residents, instantly to multiple contact paths, based off of their geo-coded locations as well as pre-configured groups. The County has also had success using Everbridge to proactively alert and inform residents during severe weather and tornado season.

## Q&A with Ed Reuter, Emergency 911 Director and Julie Pierce, Deputy Director, Bartholomew County 911 Center

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### TELL US ABOUT BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY AND THE CRITICAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES THAT YOU FACE?

There are approximately 76,000 people residing in the county – 45,000 living within in the city limits. In times of crisis when we really need to deliver important messages, there is a need to communicate both internally to our elected officials, our emergency management, our dispatch, our law enforcement, as well as externally, to our residents

### HOW AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE EVERBRIDGE AS YOUR CRITICAL COMMUNICATION SOLUTION PROVIDER?

In 2008, Bartholomew County experienced a major flood where over 2,900 homes were damaged - it had a significant impact on the community. The hospital was forced to close, and 141 patients were transferred to other area hospitals. Many areas throughout the county sustained major damage and the Emergency Operations Center did not have a way to communicate with the public. The county was unable to provide residents with fair warning about the flood, or share follow-up information after the flood



occurred. Following this event, there was a strong interest in adopting a critical communications solution to improve the way the county notified the public.

Approximately four years ago, a search team comprised of the City of Columbus and County employees, joined together to develop a plan to purchase a notification product. The team initially reviewed ten representatives, and then narrowed it down to four vendors for a final review. Ultimately, Everbridge exceeded all expectations and was chosen. It helped that Everbridge was the only vendor that sent a representative from California to present and answer questions.

### WHAT TYPES OF SITUATIONS REQUIRE THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATIONS TO INTERNAL EMPLOYEES AND RESPONDERS?

In Bartholomew County Indiana, Everbridge is used both on the employee side as well as on the citizen's side as well. There have been many occasions when severe weather was predicted—including tornados and major winter storms -- and the Bartholomew County Emergency Management Office needed to schedule meetings to prepare response efforts for specific areas of the county. Everbridge is used to deliver messages to this group of key departmental heads and elected officials, providing them with the option of attending the meeting in person, or calling in using a conference bridge. The system is also used to contact dispatchers to fill vacancies due to illnesses, or call in additional manpower when necessary.

**AND HOW ABOUT EXTERNAL? ARE THERE REGULAR INCIDENTS YOU USE EVERBRIDGE FOR EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION TO RESIDENTS?**

Bartholomew County did not purchase the SMART WEATHER app initially, but after realizing the importance of eliminating human errors and delays related to sending out critical weather messages, it was purchased. Bartholomew County consists of 11 townships which represent polygons that can refine the notifications. Everbridge allows us to refine notifications so that they only target the areas affected by the weather warnings. Upon receiving notifications from the National Weather Service, all sirens within the county are activated regardless of the actual location of the bad weather. Using Everbridge, citizens know that if they receive a warning message on their cell phone, land line or email and are also able to hear the tornado sirens, they are in the “hot” zone of where the storm is likely to occur.

Everbridge has really improved our resident situational awareness. And the fact that warnings are directly connected to the National Weather Service takes a lot of pressure off of us as directors, deputy directors or EMA directors.

Everbridge has also been used in situations with heavy police, due to events ranging from a marathon, active shooter training, barricaded individual threatening suicide, or a different high-pressure incident.

**About Everbridge**

Everbridge is a leading unified critical communications platform trusted by corporations and communities of all sizes that need to reach the right people for immediate action, collaboration, and decision-making. Connecting millions of people and internet-connected devices, the company provides reassurance that secure, compliant messages are delivered, locally and globally, received and responded to, no matter the recipient's location. Everbridge is based in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Beijing and London.

For a full product description, along with best practices and product details please see the Everbridge User Guide and Everbridge University.

**LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR RECENT SUCCESS STORY. WOULD YOU MIND DETAILING HOW YOU USED EVERBRIDGE TO TRACK DOWN A MISSING CHILD**

Bartholomew County recently experienced a major success story with Everbridge, involving a missing child. A seven year little girl had been reported missing for over an hour and thirty minutes.

Once basic background information was obtained, a message was developed, including a description of the girl and instructions for to call 911 if the little girl was located. The message was sent to residents within a one-mile radius of the incident right away...because, well, every second counts. Four minutes after the message was sent, a woman listening to the Everbridge notification on her answering machine, walked out into her front yard and observed the child walking down the street. The rest is history.

**ANY OTHER FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF EVERBRIDGE?**

The use of Everbridge system prevented a tragedy from occurring, potentially saving a life that night. If that is the only message we send out the whole year, then according to the Bartholomew County Emergency 911 Director, “it’s worth every penny.”