

Customer Spotlight

St. Clair County Emergency Management uses Everbridge COG to COG messaging during the CAUSE IV Experiment



“ My ultimate goal using the Everbridge system is to have a seamless notification system for the “Blue Water” area that is inclusive of both first responders and citizens in the United States and Canada to minimize delays.”

Jeffrey A. Friedland
HSEM Director, St. Clair County, MI

PROBLEM

The “Blue Water Area” is comprised of the United States and Canada. At certain points, only 300 feet of water separates the two countries, so what happens on one side of the border directly impacts the other in real time. There has always been cooperation including communication and official notification paths, however these notifications were not in real time.

St. Clair County, Michigan was part of the CAUSE IV experiment (Canada-U.S. Enhanced Resiliency Experiment) sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Technology Directorate (S&T) and Development Canada’s Centre for Security Science (DRDC CSS). Part of this experiment centered on notifications and situational awareness.

As an example of the benefits of CAUSE IV, and as part of an all-hazards assessment, St. Clair county’s vital infrastructure team conducts regular water user surveys, and has done several things to improve preparedness for a cross-border emergency impacting drinking water. In partnership with Lambton County in Ontario, who also have the Everbridge system, the counties communicated regularly during the Flint Water Crisis and have improved information-sharing and situational awareness between the two countries. “Our whole water distribution system is mapped out, and with Everbridge we have a quick notification tool for critical users along the river.”

SOLUTION

Communities in both countries do use the Everbridge notification system. During the CAUSE IV Experiment (Canada-U.S. Enhanced Resiliency Experiment) there were several “firsts” using the Everbridge Notification System. One of the goals of the CAUSE IV experiment was to shorten the notification times while increasing situational awareness.

Notifications using the Everbridge system shortened the notification process through two paths. The first path was cross border notification groups that allowed real time notifications to first responders without regard to which country. The second involved the new “COG to COG” messaging function within Everbridge. Messages were sent using a “beta” bridge between IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert & Warning System) in the United States and NAADS (National Alert Aggregation & Dissemination) in Canada.

Situational Awareness and cross-border coordination and collaboration was increased by using both of these messaging systems within the Everbridge system to send links to GIS applications which contained “real time” links for 911, 211, Weather Spotters, Social Media and other information.