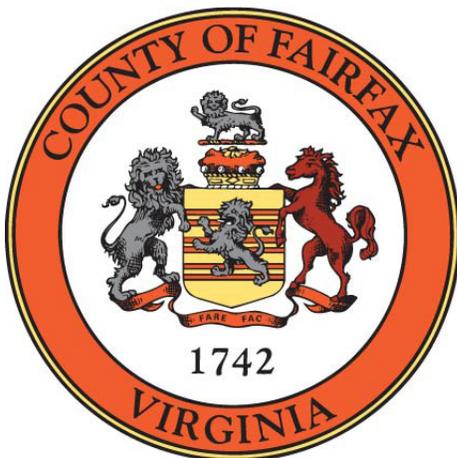# National Capital Region

> " In terms of our jurisdictions, the Everbridge platform makes the lives of our leaders much easier. They spend less time on the telephone answering calls or listening to concerns during critical events. They can get information out to the community from their iPhones with the click of button, as opposed to having to travel to their office to send the message out. It's a huge time saver."
>
> Sulayman Brown
> **National Capital Region**

OVERVIEW

The National Capital Region (NCR) is a collection of sovereign jurisdictions, including cities and counties with Maryland, DC and Virginia. The region is responsible for promoting a secure environment for over five million residents, federal and State and local organizations, in one of the most crucial government regions of our nation.

PROBLEM

The National Capital Region needed an easy-to-use, updated critical communications solution with the ability to enable jurisdictions to send operational, incident, and emergency messages to residents and the community at large.

SOLUTION

With Everbridge, jurisdictions within The National Capital Region are able to communicate securely and effectively to their resident-base during both emergencies and non-emergency events. The solution enables the NCR to engage residents through multiple contact paths based off of their geo-coded locations.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR ROLE IN FAIRFAX COUNTY, THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (NCR) AND WHY THE NCR PURSUED THE PURCHASE OF A NEW NOTIFICATION SYSTEM?

Currently I reside as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Manager for Fairfax County, Virginia which is part of the National Capital Region. The NCR is unique because it includes all of the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area including Northern Virginia and Suburban Maryland jurisdictions. It's somewhat challenging for our region to have all of the jurisdictions on the same page, so what we have in place is a regional organizational group Council of Governments (COG). All 18 jurisdictions in the NCR go to COG for regional decision making.

The Emergency Management group (Emergency Support Functions (ESF-5)) within COG decided that the region had been using the same notification system for ten years and was looking for additional options technology-wise that could facilitate easier communication within, and between different jurisdictions. Fairfax County was the lead jurisdiction and as the EOC Manager for Fairfax County, I was tasked with heading the project of identifying a vendor that could meet our requirements.

HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO STRATEGICALLY HAVE A PLAN/ALIGN STAKEHOLDERS DURING THE ROLLOUT PROCESS?

The NCR has over 5 million residents and multiple stakeholder groups. We have people that live in Maryland and work in Virginia, live in Virginia and work in DC, etc. We could be considered one state for practical purposes, and it is critical for us to get everyone on the same page. It was important to understand that this is an emergency notification system but its multiple uses could bring something to all of our stakeholders system-wise in some way, shape or form. This is crucial because even if you have a new piece of software and its working well, if people don't sign up for it and opt-in—then it won't be successful. This

required robust marketing on our end – public service announcements, brochures, postcards, magnets, pins and even temporary tattoos – anything to get people to ask, "where can I sign up for this?"

As for our fellow jurisdiction leader stakeholders, we needed collective buy-in and understanding of the plan. Without proper investment and support from each decision maker, it would have been impossible to move forward with the decision making process. Each jurisdiction has different priorities and political agendas/desires. It was important to consider the emergency management goals and incorporate those goals into a plan to move forward. Everbridge helped facilitate that process - I think that's what made us successful.

HOW DID THE NCR DECIDE ON EVERBRIDGE AND WHY IS IT THE SOLUTION YOU NEEDED?

There were several things we considered while purchasing this notification system, one of which was the ability to have a cloud based system. So instead of being behind a firewall and having to either remotely dial into a jurisdiction's server, we wanted the ability to send notifications from behind our desk, in our vehicle or on a mobile device, with or without internet access, sitting at a meeting somewhere, etc. We wanted to be able to provide notifications to our residents anywhere at a moment's notice. We also had a very short time frame in which to implement the system – our goal was to have it up and running within five or six months of purchase – which was another factor in our decision. Everbridge, in coordination with the localities was able to make it all happen for us. The contract was signed in February 2014 and we began implementing this project in April with the intention of having it completed by July 1, 2014. So it was a very, very quick turnaround.

With Everbridge, it is much easier for people to sign up and gain access to the system. Residents also have the option to control their preferences – the type of information they receive, and the time-frame they receive it. In terms of our

jurisdictions, the Everbridge platform makes the lives of our leaders much easier. They spend less time on the telephone answering calls or listening to concerns during critical events. They can get information out to the community from their iPhones with the click of button, as opposed to having to travel to their office to send the message out. It's a huge time saver.

HOW DO YOU LEVERAGE THE EVERBRIDGE SYSTEM? ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC INSTANCES YOU CAN TELL US ABOUT?

We use Everbridge for anything from weather notifications to government closings, traffic updates, data messaging (sometimes called reverse 911), CAD callback notifications, school system alerts, recreation center and library announcements. We also use the system to deliver polling station and election information, distribute information over social media, and send internal employee and inter-agency communications, etc.

One particular recent use case happened within Fairfax County. We had a federal prisoner in our jurisdiction that escaped from a hospital. We reached out to our community through the notification system using the data messaging capability as well as our existing resident database. We notified around 99,000 people eight or nine times throughout the four hour period when this prisoner was in our jurisdiction. Eventually he was picked up in a surrounding jurisdiction by their local police with the help of residents who recognized the prisoner from the notifications. So, it's a use case where the system worked, people signed up for the right notifications and they were able to help us apprehend a prisoner.

A second successful use case involved a missing person. The person in question had dementia and had wandered off. The weather happened to be chilly and there was concern that the subject was not properly dressed or prepared to be in the elements. We used the data messaging capability again and reached out to close to 80,000 residents in a three to four mile radius from the missing person's neighborhood. There were two different notifications that went out about an hour or two apart from each. He was eventually found safely at about 10 pm that night and he was taken back to his family.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR NCR AND EVERBRIDGE? IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO EXPLORE?

We just started talking to Everbridge about Nixle and we are extremely interested in the community engagement portion of that solution. Crowd sourcing, being able to identify potential emergency problem areas and finding additional ways the notification system can get information out to our residents is critical to us. We are also interested in using it to capture commuters and visitors during some of our events with the keyword opt-in function. We envision using this feature for the upcoming inauguration, as well as for the anniversary of The Million Man March that is coming up.

About Everbridge