



Successfully notifying a large community with Everbridge and opt-in awareness

Lewisville, TX, is a suburban community in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex area with a population of about 100,000 just north of Dallas on interstate 35 between Dallas and Denton. Lewisville is also the gateway to Lake Lewisville, which is one of the larger lakes in the region and supplies drinking water to area residents and to Dallas Water utilities.

Highlights

- Lewisville authorities can rapidly alert targeted individuals via mobile app.
- Customizable templates increase effectiveness of mass notifications.
- Scalable, automated contact updating.



Challenges

Lewisville required a communications solution to effectively notify residents during a wide range of emergencies and community events. They faced challenges with demonstrating the value of such a system and successfully increasing the number of residents who subscribed to receive alerts.

Solutions

The city deployed Everbridge to power the “Lewisville Citizen Alert” system, which notifies opted-in residents of emergencies, such as severe weather. The system has also been adopted for more routine public service announcements like overdue library book notifications or internal employee communications. Utility customer and billing employees also use it for delinquent utility payments. To increase resident opt-ins, Lewisville conducted an extensive awareness campaign that effectively reached residents and improved overall engagement with the system.



“As a result of our opt-in enhancement and awareness strategy for the everbridge citizen alert system, we’ve seen a 262% increase in resident opt-ins in less than a year!”

Emergency Communication Coordinator



Q&A with Emergency Communication Coordinator

How has Lewisville used Everbridge?

Weather alerts are a big use of the system. We use Everbridge during inclement weather days. If we get a 1/4 inch of ice or wintry mix on the roads, us southern folks lose our minds. We might notify employees through Everbridge to say, “Hey, it’s dangerous to get on the roads so take some leave time if you want to stay at the house.”

We have added all 900 city employees in the system, and we refresh that data annually. I also have our Emergency Operations Center personnel loaded in the system. We’ll notify about 70 of those department directors, leads, and managers around the city using templates we customized for our needs. I can alert them very quickly by using the app on my phone. Our dispatchers also use Everbridge whenever they’re down a person or two and need to reach out to folks to fill those spots.

What public health measures and safety drills are aided by Everbridge?

We recently had an active shooter drill run by our police and fire departments at a local church. We used Everbridge to notify the surrounding neighborhood — that way, citizens didn’t think it was real and get concerned with all the fire and police apparatus in the area.

We also have mosquito traps that test positive for West Nile Virus. We do a spray every time that happens, so we sent out an Everbridge alert to everyone within a half mile-radius to advise them we are spraying and to take the appropriate precautions.



How did Lewisville spread awareness to increase resident opt-ins?

During our weather awareness outreach campaign in the spring, we created a PSA that highlighted the importance of the new citizen alert system. We stressed how people could receive warnings of dangerous weather directly to their mobile devices if they signed up for the Lewisville citizen alert system. We reached virtually all the contacts in our database via their landlines.

The PSA was well received and resulted in residents enrolling their other devices and contact paths, such as their cell phone. In addition to the increased opt-ins, we received valuable data on how quick these calls could be made to all the people in our system.

In addition to the PSA, we sent information about the new system to multi-family housing residents. Often, these residents only use cell phones, so we wanted to target them specifically. We provided information to apartment offices and managers about how important it is to have multiple contact paths for each resident in case of city emergencies, and we made a flier with instructions on how to opt-in to our Everbridge system.

We distributed additional fliers, digital billboards, ads, and stories in local media outlets which instructed folks to be “Weather Aware” by signing up for alerts. At some point along the way they think, you know, well okay, fine then, I’ll go ahead and sign up.

We also worked with our IT department since the city has utility customers. We bill those customers, so we must maintain their contact data. I now have a link the IT department put together that’s internal to our network. I can click on it, and it automatically downloads a refreshed and current contact database that’s managed in real-time.

Every few months, I’ll click, download, and import the link. The platform is highly automated which helps alleviate some of the administration of acquiring and uploading contact data.

Opt-in campaign metrics

As a result of our opt-in enhancement strategy and implementing that opt-in enhancement strategy, which included the landline PSA, fliers, billboard and more, we increased opt-in contacts by 262% in about a year's time. Our campaign generated over 1.8 million media impressions for a population of just over 100,000 people.

What is an interesting success story?

Our animal services department recovered a bat that was found dead in one of our parks. Per standard procedure, we tested the animal, and it came up positive for rabies. We used Everbridge to notify the nearby neighborhoods because we know kids play at these ball fields. The message notified parents of the positive testing and asked parents to contact our animal services department if their children had any run-ins with a bat. That message generated a significant number of return calls from folks who had children who played at that park. Everbridge proved its ability to get the word out quickly to Lewisville, prevent the incident from escalating, and inform people who may have needed treatment or vaccination.

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