



Keeping Employees in the Loop: Hurricane Communications

An essential part of your hurricane response plan is communicating with employees before, during and after the storm. OnSolve® Critical Communications can help.

A hurricane is predictable, unlike sudden emergencies such as fires and earthquakes, where unexpected, immediate evacuations may be called for. By the time a hurricane makes land, your employees are safe at home, in a shelter or in a place outside the hurricane's reach.

What's not predictable is the damage the hurricane will cause and the extent of recovery it will demand. That's true for physical property, as well as for injury and loss of life. And it's also true for business continuity and disaster recovery. To minimize the damage to your business and facilitate the return to normal at the workplace, you need a strong hurricane response plan that encompasses every aspect of business continuity and disaster recovery.

An essential component of that plan is the ability to communicate with employees before, during and after the storm. OnSolve® Critical Communications can help.

Your Messaging Infrastructure

Your communications efforts begin before hurricane season starts.

First, you need to be able to contact everyone in your company. During the hurricane, your employees will certainly be in different locations. Some may be sheltering at home or at public shelters. Others will be out of the area. The most reliable way to reach everyone is by using all the modes of dissemination through your mass notification system (MNS).



Your organization can encourage employees to routinely go into your MNS's registration portal to make sure their information is correct. OnSolve® Critical Communications also offers integration with other business systems, such as human resources databases, so that contact information is readily available.

In addition, an awareness campaign can be a useful strategy to educate employees in three areas:

- Explain to your employees what a MNS is.
- Give them instructions on how to download the mobile app and use it.
- Let them know what do to if they receive an alert.

But what if a hurricane damages or destroys your region's communications infrastructure? A solid plan to maintain communication with your most critical team members is a highly important part of a business continuity and disaster recovery strategy. For example, during hurricane Katrina, satellite telephones, which don't fail when all else does, were critical to business recovery.

Your MNS also needs to be fail-proof. Make sure your provider has multiple, redundant servers throughout the country. The redundancy of services ensures instant, flawless failover, so that your system remains operational. Demand multiple levels of redundancy in geo-dispersed centers in different time zones and on different national power grids.

Business Alerts in Times of Distress

The alerts your organization sends out during hurricanes will probably include topics like office closures and re-openings, parking lot damage and other work-related messages. But it's important to remember that some of your employees may be in distress. Compassionate messages that focus on safety and health are important for organizations that want to make sure employees know they care.

It's important to remember that your employees are likely receiving alerts from government agencies, too. And while they can and should look to those agencies for important notifications, such as evacuation orders, businesses can still work to make sure they are arming employees with all of the information they need to stay safe and maintain awareness of business continuity processes.

Consistent Voice, Alerts, Delivery and Channels

Multiple information sources during a crisis create confusion. One of the principles of effective, consistent communications is to establish a single person as the voice of information for your company during the storm. Having alerts come from the same individual establishes authority. It also puts someone in charge who will know the history, the templates and the processes each time an alert is sent out and who will be available to answer questions.

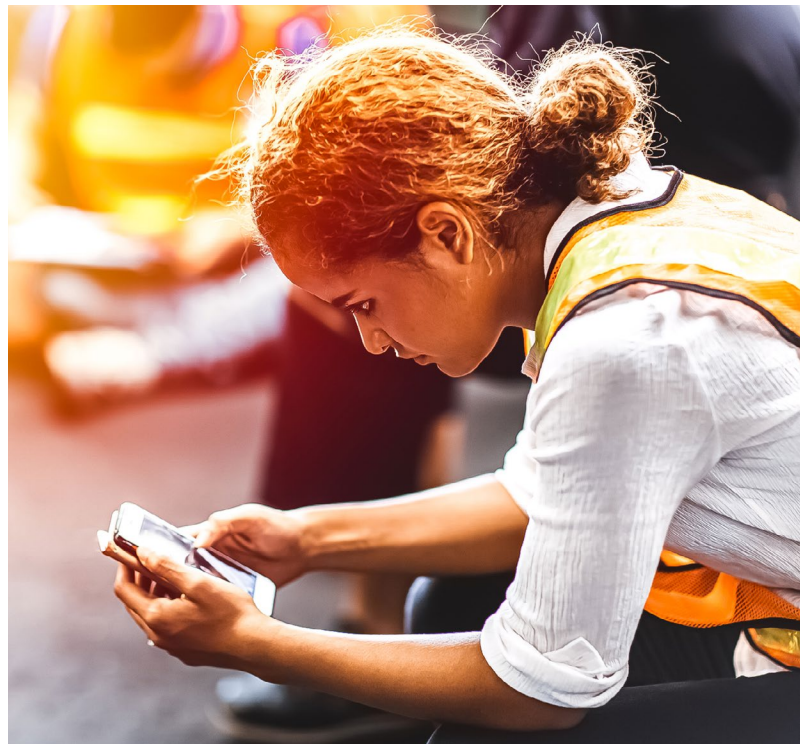
Take one more step: an extra layer of quality control. Have someone with the right skills carefully read every alert before it goes out. Things like incorrect punctuation or a homonym the spell checker didn't catch can significantly alter the meaning of a message (this is especially a factor

with text-to-speech functionality). And with a full MNS infrastructure, where alerts go out across the multiple channels at the same time, the chance of one of those mistakes happening grows.

Audio Libraries Make Things Easier

Your fundamental role in communicating with all the tiers of employees is to keep everyone informed and safe to ensure business continuity and a rapid return to normal. We encourage the creation of pre-recorded alerts so that message creation is quick. You can start your library with these topics:

- How the organization plans to communicate with employees
- Damage alerts (facilities team only)
- What to expect at the workplace (e.g. damages, outages)
- Road conditions



Manage Expectations for the Return to Office

When will the office reopen? Will it have power restored? After a storm has passed, your employees are likely wondering how and when they'll be able to return to normal routines. Setting expectations about returning to work and any damage that has occurred to buildings and facilities is an important post-hurricane topic. And if there have been evacuations, your organization needs to know where employees have been relocated and when they'll be allowed to return. These are all areas where your MNS can foster communication during times of crisis.

Fastest Path to Normal

Your business's hurricane response plan is integral to ensuring the safety of your employees and the protection of your property. While there are many key areas your plan should include, one of the most important is messaging, and that includes building pre-recorded messaging on a variety of topics to be used at a moment's notice. Integrating your MNS with your other channels of outreach is a highly effective and simple way to ensure every employee is in the loop.



Let us show you how the **OnSolve Critical Communications system** can support emergency alerting in your organization.

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About OnSolve

OnSolve delivers critical event management solutions designed to help enterprises, organizations and agencies of all sizes create the most successful outcomes when critical events occur. The OnSolve Platform for Critical Event Management combines leading risk intelligence, critical communications and incident management into one SaaS-based global portfolio. Our AI-powered platform is purpose-built to deliver fast, relevant and actionable intelligence, enable vital communications and allow response teams to react calmly and confidently.

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