

Laclede County Office of Emergency Management

Location: Laclede County, MO

Campus Type: Rural/Suburban

Personnel: 32

Building Count: 3

County Size: 768 sq. miles

County Population: 32,513

At the Laclede County Office of Emergency Management, employees and volunteers are trained specialists in the areas of disaster, doom and gloom, and just generally expecting the worst. In fact, the first sentence in the Office of Emergency Management's mission statement states that the organization exists "To protect the lives and property of all residents when major disasters threaten public safety in any part of Laclede County." With this amount of responsibility on their shoulders, it's understandable that the Director of Emergency Management, Jonathan Ayers, is constantly looking for the best way to get a message out fast to the entire county in a time of emergency.

After finding out about the Alertus® Desktop Grant Initiative, Jonathan Ayers was instantly sold on the capabilities of the system. Then, Jonathan did something with the software that caught the attention of the Alertus team. He discovered a way to send alerts to police patrol car laptops wirelessly.

Challenge

Responsible for reacting to any and all disasters in a 768 square mile area, Laclede County Office of Emergency Management needed a system capable of quickly and effectively reaching every government facility in Laclede County with a clear, concise message. Automated call-tree programs proved to be unpredictable and time consuming, while weather-messaging systems were



prone to crashing. With the lack of a centralized IT department, Laclede County required a system which would be simple to implement but powerful enough to quickly send a standardized emergency message to dozens of buildings.

Ayers discusses the organization's unique challenge and solution.

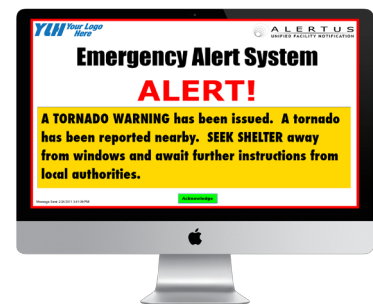
Call-Tree Alerting Problems

We used to rely on a call-tree system that allowed the user to record a voice message that the system would then send out to the cellphones of government personnel. We found that the recorded messages didn't always give a consistent message; sometimes the message can get skewed between different people. Alertus gives us a way to provide a clear concise message to every office within the government center within a matter of seconds.

Simple Implementation

One of the challenges we face in our jurisdiction is that we don't have a centralized IT department. Every office is in charge of its own IT needs, and there are a wide variety of hardware and software implementations across the county government. So our main concern when we went to implement this software was, "How difficult is this going to be for us to install, set up, and maintain on a daily basis?" I was really surprised at how simple it was. The instructions were so clear, concise, and easy to follow; setting up the server was a breeze. I already had a spare state surplus server, so we loaded Windows Server 2003 on it, and I had the Alertus system up and running. We even started testing clients in less than a day. Seriously, I had the entire package and several clients installed and working that same day, it was awesome. And keep in mind, this was accomplished even while I was handling my normal office duties.

Our Internet connection in the facility is pretty limited, and in addition to running the Alertus software, we're also running weather wire servers, radar data applications, cameras. There's a ton of stuff that goes over our internet feed, but the Alertus server runs great on even a connection as weak and busy as ours. For a system like this, I like that I can keep it in-house. If there's a problem, I know that it isn't because of a third-party service provider. I can just walk right back to our Alertus server.



Alertus Desktop Notification can deliver a facility-wide emergency notification in a matter of seconds.

Additional Notification Coverage

All of our police patrol cars have laptops mounted on the dash. After I installed Alertus Desktop Notification on our server, I got to thinking, what if we could use Alertus to send alerts to our police patrol cars? The tough books are all running on air cards, which allow them to receive alerts from the Alertus server. It really just shows the amazing flexibility of Alertus. When the team at Alertus found out what we did with the laptops in our patrol cars, even they were blown away.

We just started with the Alertus Desktop Notification software, but we like it so much that we already want to expand the system. In the city of Lebanon where we're based, there's a network that runs through the whole town. Now, the city is interested in deploying Alertus on a citywide scale. The scalability and expandability of the Alertus system is great. We can add to the system at whatever pace we want—from just being in two or three facilities to an entire city.