

Integrating a Mass Alert System into your Workplace



Why a Mass Alert System?

In the words of someone who has been there, Graham Dockrill, then co-director of Hairy Lemon, a design company with thirty employees on the Christchurch earthquake –

“In terms of communications, we were really lucky. We had our eyes opened when the smaller shake hit the city in the previous September. My senior management team made the decision there and then to print off all of our employees’ contact details and keep them in our wallets or purses. It seems so low tech now but without those numbers things would have been very problematic.”

When the 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit Christchurch’s central business district, Graham’s office evacuated, never to return. He and his management team were able to manually text everyone as soon as telecommunications were restored and check that everyone was safe,

“If we hadn’t carried those numbers out on our persons, it would have been a far more drawn out process.”

Fortunately, today’s mass alert systems have supplanted paper-based contact lists and the need to individually text each individual employee. Now, businesses can send texts to pre-defined groups or all staff in minutes following an incident. But it isn’t just having the technology, it is being prepared too:

“Nowadays it won’t be a piece of paper but whatever the system, the principles are the same. It needs to be accessible outside the office, up to date, and efficient. You have to have a plan.”

Integrating a mass alert system

If your company does not already use a mass alert system, it is simple to integrate mass communication capabilities into your emergency management plan. You do not have to scrap your entire emergency management plan, only modify it to include the more up-to-date communication capabilities – and then practice makes perfect.

Our expert team recommend that you follow these steps:

Get set up: select an alert system that meets your needs and upload and update your existing contact information into your platform. Your provider should do this for you.

Practice: the emergency alert system can be used as part of a drill. Notify employees via text and email and even social media if you wish, that a “test” is going to be activated.

Activate the “test”: send a communication via text, and optionally via email and social media. Have them respond back with a simple yes to the question: “Are you okay?” Check your broadcast reports to see how many have responded and follow up with those who haven’t, as you would in a real emergency.

Practice drills regularly: even with the best and most modern emergency plan in place, it can only be successful if the employees understand the plan and know how to respond when the plan is activated. Change up your drills to include all the risks you identified when you designed your plan, for example evacuation, a weather event or a natural disaster.

Give your employees peace of mind that they are protected in a fire, flood, power outage, workplace violence event, natural disaster, or any other situation.

Seek employee feedback: use your mass alert system again to send out a survey link – another opportunity for practice to make perfect. Act on the responses - the most prepared organizations are those who learn and take those lessons to improve.

Reflect on:

- What went well?
- What could we improve?
- How well did we communicate?

Make the most of your mass alert system: it may be intended to communicate during an emergency, but should also be considered for any mass communication. When an organization needs to send an immediate and important notification to everyone in the organization or just to specified groups of its employees, the alert system can provide the ideal vehicle to get the message across reliably. Train your team leaders so that they can also benefit from your emergency alert platform.