



# EMPLOYEE SAFETY

## CRITICAL COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

[www.everbridge.com](http://www.everbridge.com)

## Introduction

As an organization, one of your major priorities is keeping the people you employ safe. This can be a difficult task, especially if you aren't prepared. In order to best protect your employees from potential threats, you need to plan for any issue they could face in advance. Not only do you have to understand what threats employees could face, but also how you're going to communicate any relevant information pertaining to the threat and them.

Below are a few questions you should be asking when planning your communication strategy for potential employee threats:

- Who needs information about the potential threat?
- What communication paths (e.g. email, text, etc.) would best transmit the required information?
- What channels or devices might be unavailable or most available during different threats?
- What constraints exist?
- Who should be the "source" for emergency messages?

When attempting to keep employees safe, there are generally three groups that you'll need to worry about. Those currently in the office, those traveling to and from the office and those working away from the office—whether they are traveling or a remote worker. The latter often presents the most trouble, as these employees are most difficult to reach.

## Are You Prepared for Workplace Mobility?

In terms of employee safety, workplace mobility is a growing concern because, at any time, a portion of your workforce may be working outside of your office. This adds a new layer to employee safety. Not only do you have to keep your employees in the office safe, but those out of the office as well. Failure to inform all employees about threats to their safety could result in unnecessary harm to these people and ultimately, could increase the impact on your organization.

Communication is critical when attempting to keep employees safe. Being able to reach people via multiple contact methods about potential threats can help keep them out of harm's way. Utilizing a critical communication system for employee safety could prove beneficial. It can help you eliminate manual, out-of-date call-tree procedures, which generally take much longer to get the **right message** to the **right people** about potential threats. Below you'll read about some critical communication best practices for keep your employees safe:

## Multi-Modal Communication

When an employee is in danger, the goal is to **reach the individual, not the device**, and this is best accomplished by sending a notification to the person's preferred path.

When it comes to employee safety, no communication path is a one-size-fits-all solution for reaching your contacts. Your younger employees may be most responsive to an SMS message or push notification while your more tenured employee could prefer an email or phone call. Additionally, consider the time of day or day of the week – someone on a Friday night is more likely to view and answer a text than a work email, while on Monday more the inverse might be true. For this reason, you'll want to be able to communicate with your employees via as many contact paths as possible.

This is especially important when you have employees in the field in dangerous situations. You'll want to be able to reach that person's mobile device as many ways as possible—SMS, push notification, email, cell phone call, etc.—to make sure they are aware of the potential danger they could be in.

Without the ability to reach your employees via multiple different contact paths, you could be losing vital time when attempting to warn people about potential threats. A critical communication system with this functionality is essential when attempting to keep your employees safe in today's mobile, on-the-go society.

## Two-Way Communication with Employees

Communication is a two way street. Getting the message to your employees about potential danger is just one piece of the puzzle. You'll also want to be able to hear back from them to determine whether or not they are safe, or if they need help. Polling messages are great for employee safety because you're able to send out a message about a threat, and give your employees a number of potential polling options to send back.

Below is an example of how you can use polling to keep employees safe:

**Message:** The current rain storm has caused the river to overflow and flood Main St. Are you in the area?

**Polling Responses:**

1. I am in the area and require assistance
2. I am in the area and don't require assistance
3. I am not in the area

This example used severe weather, but this type of two-way communication could prove beneficial in any type of incident, and help keep your employees safe.

### **Leverage Message Mapping/Pre-Built Templates**

When employees are in danger, time is of the essence. The faster you can get a message to them about a potential threat the better. One best practice to speed up the process is to use message mapping and pre-built templates. A major benefit of this strategy is that crafting messages in advance helps ensure that employees receive and understand your critical notifications, instructions and updates. This is important because message senders can panic and hesitate in emergencies—leading to unclear notifications, and recipients' reading comprehension can drop to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. By creating message templates in advance, you can help eliminate these two factors and make sure that your employees receive clear and informative messages about potential threats. Below are a few tips that could prove beneficial when message mapping for potential threats:

#### **Dr. Chandler's 3-3-30 Rule**

- No more than 3 message points
- Deliver 3 short sentences
- Keep the key content in the first 30 words

- Plan for scenarios in advance
- Follow Dr. Chandler's 3-3-30 rule
- Keep it simple in a crisis
- Think about your communication path
- Test, train and fix

With message mapping and pre-built message templates, you can eliminate variables that could impact your ability to send clear, informative notifications when employees are in danger.



## **Use Cases**

Jody Grizz, Continuity Program Coordinator, LG&E and KU Energy recently shared a couple of use cases as to how a critical communication system helped keep his employees in the field safe during specific incidents.

### **Customer Threats**

As a utility company, LG&E and KU Energy sends technicians into the field on a daily basis to handle customer issues. Many customers are receptive, but there are also those who pose a major threat to the technicians. Grizz said the company averages about three customer threats per week, ranging anywhere from a threat saying if the technician comes on to his or her property they will shoot them with a gun to sicking their dog on the technician. In either of these situations, the technicians need to be notified as quickly as possible so they don't go on to the customer's property with the proper authorities to keep them safe. Failure to notify the technicians of this threat information in a timely manner could result in unnecessary harm. This also helps with unionized employees, as it shows the union the company cares about the safety of their employees.

### **Severe Weather**

LG&E and KU Energy has technicians and other employees who work outside on a consistent basis. For this reason, these workers need to be informed about severe weather. If there is a thunderstorm on the way that could put the lives of people working on power lines in danger, LG&E and KU Energy needs to be able to get a message to that worker as soon as possible. This is a situation where polling messages come in handy, as you're able to send a message to a technician about severe weather on the way, and they can send a message back letting you know they received the notification and are no longer in harm's way.

## Key Recommendations

Keeping employees safe should be one of the main goals of any organization. Whether the threat is a severe storm on the way or a possible shooter, employees should be informed about all things that could endanger them. One of the most successful strategies that can help keep your employees safe is to implement a critical communication system. Getting the right message, to the right person at the right time can make a huge difference during potential threats. Below are some key recommendations to consider when deploying a critical communication system to improve employee safety:

- 1) Send notifications to employees about potential threats via multiple modalities. One employee may respond well to a phone call while others prefer SMS. It is important to be able to send messages via all types of contact paths so you have the best chance of reaching employees who may be in danger.
- 2) Create a two-way conversation with employees, so you're able to hear back from them to know if they're still in danger and need help, or are safe.
- 3) When an employee is in danger, every second counts. To avoid wasting time, it is recommended to take advantage of message mapping and pre-built message templates so you don't have to worry about writing the content and can just send a notification to your employee who's in harm's way.
- 4) The ability to reach employees from your mobile device is critical, because you never know when a threat will arise. If you're away from your desk, it is important that you can still notify your employees of potential dangers.



## About Everbridge

Everbridge provides a unified critical communication suite that helps clients be better prepared, make better decisions, and respond quickly and confidently during disruptive events. When an incident happens, whether it's a natural disaster or an IT service outage, we automate communications to ensure that the right messages get to the right people at the right time.

Widely recognized by analysts as the market leader, Everbridge solutions are trusted by clients in all major industries and government sectors to connect with over 50 million people around the world.

### THE ONLY END-TO-END PLATFORM

- **Planning:** Everbridge is easy to set up, maintain, and organize, meaning that you're always ready for a quick, coordinated response. Everbridge ensures that the right messages get to the right people - with the most advanced opt-in portal on the market, streamlined integration with internal and external data sources, and simple group and contact management.
- **Assessment:** When trouble strikes, you need rich insight, presented simply - so you can quickly assess potential impact and make an informed decision to avoid loss. Everbridge offers the only solution on the market that meets these demanding requirements, with the most advanced interactive dashboard in the industry.
- **Response:** In critical situations, ease-of-use can mean the difference between an effective response and a mistake that carries serious consequences. Everbridge is engineered to be simple to use under pressure, with a user interface that accelerates time-to-message and reduces the likelihood of errors.
- **Delivery:** Even during large-scale disruptions, Everbridge stays on. The most advanced platform in the industry ensures that you reach your contacts - every time. And with worldwide coverage and capabilities, including globally local calling infrastructure and data storage, we're ready to support you wherever your people are in the world.

Visit [www.everbridge.com](http://www.everbridge.com) to learn more.