

# RapidReach an important notification tool for Düsseldorf Airport emergency management

RapidReach is an important component in the emergency management at Düsseldorf airport. The system has been installed in the operations control room since the year 2000 and it allows a large number of people to be quickly and reliably notified by phone, fax and SMS. RapidReach is used for everything from accident and evacuation drills to informing airlines when there are technical problems in the luggage handling department.

Düsseldorf International Airport is the third largest airport in Germany with a large number of worldwide flight connections. Up to 65,000 people travel through the airport every day. One reason for this is that Düsseldorf is located in one of Europe's most urbanized areas with an exceptionally well-developed infrastructure.

After a fire in April 1996 when 17 people died, the traffic was disrupted by the rebuilding of the airport for several years. But according to the German TV program "Airportcheck 2003" it now sets an excellent example for other airports. On the anniversary of the fire the managing director of Düsseldorf airport Peter Lange said: "Today our thoughts go to the victims and to their families. It is therefore our duty to make sure that every necessary measure is taken to make this airport as safe as possible."

Regular drills take place in order to obtain optimal safety arrangements at the airport. One drill, "Echo 2003", was arranged to test performance in the event of a fire at take off. Around 300 people took part in the drill. Lange says about the event: "The only way we can prove our emergency management is through regular drills." Within the framework of this contingency planning the automated notification system RapidReach plays an important part. With this system the control room staff can notify emergency personnel and action forces by



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phone, fax and SMS. Monthly drills are organized to verify that everybody on the call lists can be reached.

A real emergency occurred in April 2003 when there was a fire in an airport garage. In this case RapidReach was used not only to notify emergency crews but also to start the evacuation. This incident showed how well the notification procedure works – almost everybody

was reached. The recipients were also able to respond to the notification by pressing a digit on their phone. In addition, the control room staff could follow every call and every response in real-time on their computer screen during the call-out.

RapidReach, however, is more frequently used in the daily operations than in emergencies. For example, if an abandoned piece of luggage has been found, nearby shops must be informed and defusing experts must be called in as well as people closing off the area. RapidReach is also used to inform airlines when there are interruptions in the luggage handling department. Furthermore, when the SkyTrain between the train station and the terminals is out of use the system automatically calls in drivers for replacement buses.

David Herriman, Head of Contingency Planning, says about the everyday notifications: "Our customers appreciate the speed of information and regard it as good service." More than a thousand notifications, mostly drills, have been made with RapidReach. Seventy-five percent of the predefined scenarios are ready for use in a real emergency. These are marked with a blue colour. The remaining twenty-five percent



*Wilfried Bischoff in the control room with RapidReach.*

need to be complemented by a new sound message and are marked with a red colour.

After a call-out, if the airport needs to prove that a message was actually sent and when, all they need to do is present the reports – RapidReach registers every call and every response!

*Enera – the developers of RapidReach – are leading suppliers of software tools for automated communications. With head quarters in Gothenburg, Sweden, Enera's products are marketed and supported in a number of countries worldwide, mainly in Europe and the United States. RapidReach is used as an emergency notification tool in communication centers, control rooms, and operation centres in a wide range of industries.*



**Enera International AB** • Sisjö Kullegata 6 • 421 32 Västra Frölunda • Sweden • Phone +46 31 680 780 • Fax +46 31 683 339 • [www.enera.com](http://www.enera.com)

**Enera Ltd** • Pentlandfield Business Park • Roslin • Midlothian EH25 9RE • UK • Phone +44 131 440 9675 • Fax +44 131 440 9682 • [www.enera.co.uk](http://www.enera.co.uk)

**Enera Inc** • 1525 East 55th Street • Chicago • IL 60615 • USA • Phone +1 773 955 4475 • Fax +1 773 955 4999 • [www.enera.com](http://www.enera.com)