

RapidReach Key Feature of Scottish Borders Flood Warning System

Scottish Borders Council have recently implemented new plans which aim to improve the management of communication during floods in the region. Enera Ltd. are pleased to announce that RapidReach has been selected to be a key feature of the new Flood Warning System.

History shows that Scottish Borders experience major flooding periodically. Less serious, localised flooding, however, occurs on an annual basis, and some households and businesses are located in areas of increased risk from such floods. These conditions lead to Scottish Borders Council drawing up a new and more efficient Flood Contingency Plan.

The new arrangements, which were launched in June 2002, are built on the principles of "Integrated Emergency Management". This means complete co-operation between the Council, the Lothian & Borders Police, and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).

According to Jim Gill, Assistant Emergency Planning Officer at Scottish Borders Council, the core of the arrangements is a multi-discipline Flood Co-ordination Group combined with an effective monitoring system, which automatically gathers data on river levels and rainfall. In addition, information from the Met Office allows SEPA to provide early warnings for those considered at highest risk.

"The aims of introducing RapidReach", says Jim, "are to improve the system of delivering flood warnings to the people throughout Scottish Borders, and to free up valuable Police resources."

The households and businesses considered at highest risk are divided into 24 Flood Warning Groups. The old warning system required the Police to manually telephone these groups to warn them in a critical



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situation. This was very time consuming and labour intensive for the Police, especially since resources were needed out in the field. An additional weakness in the old system was that, in general, each vulnerable premise had only one contact number. With RapidReach group members can give several contact numbers, including their mobile number.

RAPIDREACH®

Case Study

Jim explains how the Council decided to invest in RapidReach: "In the knowledge that automated voice messaging technology had advanced greatly, Scottish Borders Council decided to look into this as an alternative. After looking at a number of products on the market we chose RapidReach on the basis of price and simplicity of operation."

The RapidReach system, which is now in place at Scottish Borders Council, operates on four dedicated telephone lines. This allows a speedy distribution of warnings to group members. "RapidReach ensures that everyone receives the same message and advice in a quick and efficient manner", says Jim. "It records when the message was received or, if not received, a reason for it not happening."

Furthermore, RapidReach allows distribution of the Floodline telephone number, where group members can obtain further information or advice, which takes pressure off the Police Control Room and Council Services.

The new system has allowed the Council to add extra groups to the arrangement. One group is the Professional Group, which includes key players, such as Flood Prevention Engineer and Head of Operations. This group is always included each time the system is activated to issue a warning. Another group is the Test Group, which allows the system to be completely tested from the control rooms of the Council or the Police.



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According to Jim, the Council have plans to expand the usage of RapidReach into other application areas: "Now that the flood warning service is operating successfully our attention is turning to additional uses for RapidReach and it is hoped that a system to automate the emergency call-out of key staff will be implemented in the near future."

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.



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