

# Notification after an Accident

Fast notification of staff members and other involved parties is an important part of any crisis management program. The use of automated notification systems is increasing as more airlines and airports realize the need to ensure quick, efficient, and reliable emergency notifications.

The strictly regulated aviation industry has tough requirements on timely and accurate notifications. However, in exercises, drills, and emergencies most airports and airlines still call their staff manually. Some companies use call trees or cascades instead, while others rely on paging systems. The disadvantages of these three call-out procedures are numerous.

Manual call-outs are time-consuming, people-intensive, and insufficiently reliable. Experience shows that a manual call-out requires an average of 2½ minutes per person (including searching in various lists, dialling, redialling, trying different numbers, relaying different information verbally and answering the questions that inevitably come, and making notes and keeping track of responses). If an airline or airport wants to get hold of a great number of people manually, they need staff to make the phone calls. For example, to notify 50 people within five minutes, they would need 25 people to make all the calls. However, if only two dispatchers were available for this task, it would take them more than two hours to notify the same 50 people. Another disadvantage of manual call-outs is the fact that they are not sufficiently reliable because people on the lists may be forgotten. Moreover, during the call-out the staff in the dispatch or control center cannot take any incoming calls, nor can they focus on the emergency.

Call trees or cascades take a long time, too, and they are even less reliable than the manual call-outs described above. All it needs is one missing link and the whole notification process will fail. Another major drawback is that call trees or cascades cannot be stopped once they have been started. Besides, the message may be distorted in the notification process so that the last person in the call tree gets a different message



than the first. What is worse, nobody in the emergency control center has an overview of the result.

Paging systems likewise have a number of shortcomings. These systems can only enable a one-way communication. As the recipients of the messages cannot respond interactively, the dispatchers in the emergency control center are in the dark about the outcome of the procedure. That is why companies often notify twice as many people as they need for the specific incident because they cannot be sure who will be able to come and who will not. Moreover, as the pagees do not get any detailed messages, they will call in for more information and thus keep the dispatchers from dealing with the incident.

In summary, manual call-outs, call trees, and paging systems do not seem appropriate methods for mission-critical communications. As more and more airlines and airports realize the need to ensure quick, efficient, and reliable emergency notifications, the use of state-of-the-art automated notification systems is increasing. Automated notification systems have a host of advantages. They are quick (up to 600 times faster), efficient (they need just one operator), reliable (everybody on the list is called), and structured (different scenarios enable comprehensive planning and flexible crisis management).

### **RapidReach reaches people rapidly**

RapidReach is a communications tool of this kind, used to quickly and efficiently contact groups of people with messages. The automated notification system turns a regular PC into a phone bank and makes all the calls in next to no time. It will search for people at various phone, pager and fax numbers, relay information, prompt for a response and log the result. RapidReach can make literally 100s of calls in minutes. Using predefined scenarios, an operator can activate the system with just a few mouse clicks, and he does not have to speak a word.

RapidReach is so fast because it uses multiple phone lines simultaneously. Moreover, its automated dialogue (recipients respond by simply pressing buttons on their touchtone telephones) precludes unwanted questions and small-talk. Thus, even with the smallest capacity (four lines) RapidReach is ten times faster than any operator.

While RapidReach is an easy-to-use and easy-to-learn Windows-based system, it is also an advanced solution. It allows operators to send voice messages to regular and mobile phones, text messages to fax machines, to alpha pagers (mobile phones with SMS) and via e-mail, as well as numerical messages to numerical pagers (the pagee can then call back into the system and respond as if he had been called). The result of each phone call is logged with the recipient's name, message received, telephone number, response, and start and stop times. The user can monitor the whole process in real-time and print out reports for review and distribution.

### **Areas of application**

In the aviation industry fast notification is an important part of any crisis management program. At an airport such emergencies may include hijackings, bomb threats, fires, accidents and other mass casualty incidents. The call-out system, however, can also be used to notify staff for winter maintenance, as well as to relay critical information to shops and all the other residents that you find at an airport. With RapidReach, airports can also offer a notification service to smaller airlines that lack the communications infrastructure at the respective airport. The system is also suitable for any routine communications in the daily operations of an airport.

An airline can also benefit from using RapidReach for its crisis management, for exercises, for information from its helpdesk in cases of network or other IT disruptions, as well as for non-emergency notifications such as personnel notifications (pilots and crews, for example).

Besides the measurable benefits of a faster and more efficient call-out process and the time savings involved, RapidReach is also a great stress-reducer, preventing chaos and relieving the system operator(s) of making the calls. In any emergency situation time is of immeasurable value, and every minute gained in limiting the damage and restoring operations is likely to result in measurable saving of money and maybe also immeasurable savings of injuries and damages.

RapidReach was originally developed to handle staffing emergencies during snow storms, but has many other applications not only in the aviation industry. It is also used in disaster/business recovery and contingency planning in the financial services industry as well as in other industries (notably in the nuclear and chemical industries) where changing circumstances require fast notification and staffing.



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