SAFETY SENSE

Weathering The Storm With Communication

(NAPSA)—The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration just released its 2015 predictions, and there's good news and bad news. The good news is that fewer hurricanes than normal are predicted, but the bad news is that even one storm is too much. And if weather forecasts have taught us one thing, it's that things rarely go as planned.

Last year, the Atlantic saw six hurricanes form, including two major storms. While most populated areas were spared, parts of North Carolina were flooded and Bermuda was struck by two hurricanes within a week. The variation in damages we see in any year highlights that severe weather forecasting is still an inexact science. The result is a mixture of unnecessary panic and unprepared populations that can put significant pressure on local governments and emergency services.

Just as a hurricane brings chaos wherever it goes, the government agencies and organizations charged with the safety of citizens face an uphill battle when it comes to coordination. According to a report issued by the National Weather Service, agencies need the ability to communicate with one another—and with the general public—during an emergency weather event. In most areas, local government offices, emergency medical services, law enforcement, hospitals and media outlets all maintain their own contacts and a variety of different communication channels. When dangerous weather develops, this makes it a challenge to rapidly notify citizens and coordinate response efforts.

Traditionally, efforts to reach the public have been limited to TV or radio broadcasts, but emergency mass notification systems are now enabling communities to broadcast alerts more widely, including voice and text notifications, to millions of citizens. Equally important, however, is the ability of these organizations to communicate with one another. As weather systems develop, forecasters need to be able to notify emergency medical responders so they can prepare for an increase in demand. As conditions progress, responders in the field need the ability to update one another in real time, such as if a street becomes flooded and needs to be closed.

Good communication can help you weather the storm.

To address both sets of needs, government offices and emergency responders should consider deploying a networked crisis communication system, such as AtHoc Connect, that includes these capabilities:

- The ability for separate organizations to communicate with one another while each maintains its own sensitive information
- The ability to send and receive notifications via multiple channels including desktop, mobile, two-way radios, warning sirens, roadside electronic signs and any other alerting method that is available
- Rich, informed, two-way communication that gives responders in the field the ability to share text, photos, video and the location information of individuals for more-informed decision making and personnel tracking.

A strong communication foundation based on such principles reduces the chaos during a hurricane and gives everyone better situational awareness. A networked crisis communication system gives communities the notification and coordination tools to keep citizens safe, whether it's hurricane season or not.

To learn more, visit www.athoc.com.