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Colorado Renewable Energy Society

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Seven Best Practices for Emergency Notification

Colleges and universities are still reeling from the massacre at Virginia Tech in April and are looking for technology to improve emergency communication for times of crisis. So why do experts say it's better to get best practices in place first?

In an article on the Campus Technology website, Dian Schaffhauser says in the two weeks following the April 16 Virginia Tech shootings, "at least 14 vendors of campus communication solutions (and similar) released 'thought pieces' through the major PR wire services, with headlines such as, 'Could Emergency Phone Notification Have Prevented Virginia Tech Massacre?' 'Rapid Notification Critical in Emergency Situations,' 'Personal 'Emergency Notification System Allows Schools to Reach Students Instantly,' and 'Campus Safety: How Do We Communicate During a Crisis?'" But the real question, Schaffhauser says, is whether or not technology can solve mass communication problems. Instead of jumping to find something, Schaffhauser says the experts recommend implementing some best practices first.

"Those who have weathered campus emergencies that depended upon fast, effective communication with the campus community say technology is only part of the solution," Schaffhauser adds. She then goes in-depth into seven of those critical best practices, including:

- 1) Know your resources and their alternatives
 - 2) Internalize the plan via practice
 - 3) Expect to make decisions based on incomplete information
 - 4) The fewer people involved in decision-making and communication, the better
 - 5) One size does not fit all: Simultaneously push alerts in different formats
 - 6) Pre-define "Emergency," and communicate it to the community
 - 7) Layer your approaches to communication
- Google for more information.

Subject: I C E (In Case of Emergency)

We all carry our mobile phones with hundreds of names/ numbers stored in its memory but yet nobody, other than ourselves, know which of these numbers belong to our near and dear ones?

In case we are involved in an accident or had a heart attack and the people attending us get hold of our mobile phone but don't know which number to call to inform our family members. Yes, there are many numbers stored but which one is the contact person in case of an emergency?

For this reason, we must have one or more telephone numbers stored under the name ICE (In case of Emergency) in our mobile phones.

Recently, the concept of "ICE" is catching up quickly. It is simple, an important method of contact during emergency situations.

As cell phones are carried by majority of the population, just store the number of a contact person or person who should be contacted at during an emergency as "ICE" (meaning In Case of Emergency).

The idea was thought up by a paramedic who found that when they went to the scenes of accidents, there were always mobile phones with patients, but they didn't know which number to call. He therefore thought that it would be a good idea if there was a nationally recognized name for this purpose.

Following a disaster in London, the East Anglican Ambulance Service has launched a national "In case of Emergency (ICE)" campaign.

In an emergency situation, Emergency Service personnel and hospital staff would then be able to quickly contact your next of kin, by simply dialing the number stored as "ICE".

For more than one contact name simply enter ICE1, ICE2 and ICE3 etc. A great idea that will make a difference! Let's spread the concept of ICE by storing an ICE number in our mobile phones today!

The Thoughts of an American Citizen - Part 1

These observations come only from my own experience, my ability to read and interpret history, and the founding documents of our country. I have included excerpts from historical documents and would encourage everyone to read the full text of these documents to understand the true meaning as they were written.

I grew up in the 1960's and 70's in the south east of Texas to lower middle class parents... and I observed the injustice of that time in our history first hand. Segregation, Prejudice and Hatred were the norm and even as a child, I wondered how it could ever change. Our town was split down Ninth Avenue, blacks on one side and whites on the other. We even had different drinking fountains and restrooms. The Klan was still a strong organization in the south and marches and cross burnings were pretty common. In the innocence of childhood, I couldn't understand why this was happening. After all we were all Americans. Right? Television was still black and white at the time and I remember watching Walter Cronkite on the evening news with reports from all over the country of people protesting for Civil Rights and an end to the Vietnam War. I watched as citizens of our country were beaten and tear-gassed by police and the military for speaking out against the injustices inflicted upon them and saw the horrors of War as the news correspondents reported from the bloody foxholes and jungles of Southeast Asia... I was too young to really understand what was going on, but I did understand (thanks to my father and the public school system) that we, as Americans have the right of free speech and to peaceably assemble. Here again, I wasn't quite sure what that meant, but it was plain to see on the T.V., that something was very wrong...even through a child's eyes. And in May of 1970, while I watched the news with my father, I witnessed, to this day, the most horrific event of my life...The National Guard (Our Government) actually gunning down innocent civilians... our own citizens. That could have been me or you or a family member, a neighbor or loved one, just normal, everyday Americans, speaking out against the same War and injustice I had watched on T.V. most of my life. Again, it just didn't seem right. As I grew up and gained knowledge of those times, I began to understand the basis of all that turmoil. I realized that "Equal Justice Under Law" didn't pertain to everyone and colored people of the time were just speaking out against the injustices they had suffered for over 300 years... and nothing had really changed in all that time (and I wonder sometime if it has changed yet). They were only equal on paper and they had a legitimate gripe, as did the people protesting the War. I would like to add that, I do not condone the violence of those bloody times or militant action and do not wish that degree of chaos on our country ever again. Those were dark days in our history... as a people and as a country. We do have the ability however, to learn from those experiences, the gains we made in civil society and the consequences of an all too powerful and corrupt government. That is why it is imperative that we hold on to every single one of our Civil Liberties.

Today, we live with many of those same problems... our civil liberties being stripped away, an unprovoked occupation of another country, civil injustice, media suppression and a corrupt and all too powerful government. The names and faces have changed (well, not all of them) and I haven't seen street riots and tear gas (nor do I want to), but the parallels are obvious.

Our founding fathers created something special and unique when they laid down the roots of our society...we call it The Constitution of The United States. The whole of what we as Americans stand for, was written down in twenty little pages. Not some big tome that is impossible to read and understand, but twenty little pages, written in plain language that any eighth grader with a desire can pick up, read and understand. It's the longest standing Constitution in the world and I am proud of that. We accomplished something that in all of human civilization had not happened before...a society governed by the people. Not a King or Emperor, but By The People.

In July of 1776, Thomas Jefferson drafted a document to be delivered to King George III of Britain. In that document were written these words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness...That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just Powers from The Consent of The Governed"

These words I take from our Declaration of Independence and I use these words not to instill rebellion or revolution, but to engage