Case Study - Mass Notification Systems

Cities & Counties

Arlington County & The City of Alexandria

Background

Arlington, Va. is a world-class urban community that was originally part of the “10-mile square” parcel of land surveyed in 1791 to be the Nation’s Capital. Home to some of the most influential organizations in the world, including the Pentagon, Arlington stands out as one of America’s paramount places to live, visit and do business.

Federally-Funded National Capital Region Pilot Program

Arlington County’s Office of Emergency Management, (OEM), in partnership with the City of Alexandria’s OEM, was selected under a federal grant from the Department of Homeland Security to manage the pilot test of a new outdoor warning system. The federally funded $400,000 pilot program was authorized by the Emergency Preparedness Council of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

The Needs

Arlington’s emergency managers use a “system of systems” to provide urgent information to those who live in, work in and visit Arlington. Arlington’s primary emergency communications systems before the implementation of Cooper Notification’s Mass Notification System (MNS), includes Arlington Alert, which sends text messages to mobile devices and e-mail. Arlington also sends emergency information to commercial broadcast media, keeps its Web site current, and puts emergency information on a local radio station with emergency information.

In addition to updating their current notification system, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria needed an indoor and outdoor emergency warning system to:

- Address people who are attending special events, visiting, or in transit
- Reach people who might not receive emergency warnings from other sources
- Operate with their current emergency communications system

On behalf of the National Capital Region Pilot, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria selected Cooper Notification’s WAVES (Wireless Audio Visual Emergency System) as the region’s emergency warning system. Also known as a MNS, WAVES includes the following systems:

- Outdoor (Giant Voice) Warning Systems
- Portable Alerting Systems
- Regional Alerting System

A WAVES Integrated Base Station (IBS) command and control unit has been installed in the Arlington OEM and in the Alexandria OEM. These are the primary control stations, which have been integrated into one seamless system for a Regional Alerting System.

The Outdoor Warning System includes WAVES High Power Speaker Towers (SPT), which cover large areas with crisp, intelligible warnings. The speakers broadcast live and recorded voice messages, tones and sirens. The SPTs have been installed in Arlington at six locations and in the City of Alexandria in two...
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The WAVES MNS was successfully integrated with Arlington’s emergency managers’ “system of systems.” With 10 outdoor alert systems in place, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria can effectively reach people in all surrounding areas. The system also allows the OEMs to send the right message to the right person by using zones and sub zones without causing panic or disturbing individuals who are unaffected by the threat.

The system was put to use on July 4, 2007 when Arlington County emergency managers received warnings that storms and heavy hail were spreading to their county. They used Cooper Notification’s MSPT at the Iwo Jima Memorial, which is located in Arlington, across the Potomac river from Washington, D.C. to evacuate residents who where there to watch the Independence Day fireworks.