



Efficient
Communication
is the Key to
Successful
Incident
Management

case study

How the Cleveland Clinic improved incident response communications as well as day-to-day operations with Send Word Now.

In times of emergency, communities and individuals turn to government agencies, healthcare systems and business enterprises for essential services. However, these organizations are themselves subject to natural disasters—and the resulting technological disruptions that can lead to service interruptions. That’s why organizations implement incident response plans to mitigate the risk of a wide range of disruptions, from severe weather to information technology failures. A key component of incident management is efficiently communicating with staff and other affected individuals. Large healthcare systems using OnSolve Send Word Now as part of their incident management platform while also exploring ways of using it for more routine staffing communications.





Incident Response Communications

The sheer scope of communicating in an emergency situation presents challenges to a large institution like the Cleveland Clinic, a nonprofit, academic medical facility that combines clinical care with medical research. Its staff includes over 11,800 nurses, 3,500 doctors and researchers, as well as over 51,000 employees. In 2016, its main campus, along with its satellite facilities, saw more than seven million visits.

When an incident occurs, organizations need to share information widely and rapidly. Incident management teams must disseminate critical information in ways not well served by normal business communication channels, like email and instant messaging.

Mass texting and mass calling can broadcast alert information to a large audience in a short time period. The organization is well-practiced in incident management. In 2014, the Cleveland Clinic decided to investigate providers of communications technologies that support incident management and subsequently implemented Send Word Now. Now, when events like power outages and severe weather disrupt the hospital's operations, the incident management team (a team of 110 members) receives a message via Send Word Now and then joins a group call to determine who will staff the incident management center.

Customizing Communications

Ease of use was one of the features that was important to the Cleveland Clinic. They needed a streamlined process for loading data from human resource systems allows it to quickly and efficiently populate a communication system's database, which is critical in deploying such a system. By minimizing the need for extensive extraction, transformation, and loading processes, Send Word Now compresses deployment schedules. As an added benefit, automated data sharing procedures like these can reduce the risk of costly and time-consuming data quality errors. Another feature that was important to the Cleveland Clinic was the ability to customize its communications. The incident management team uses Send Word Now's customization and configuration tools to target communications to specific staff depending on the situation. The clinic has defined almost 90 different incident scenarios, including state-mandated incident types, such as severe weather, bomb threat, or active shooter, as well as custom-defined scenarios. With Send Word Now, different distribution groups can be created, so only to those who need to know specific information about an incident will receive a message. This is a welcome feature for incident responders who would otherwise have to filter messages not related to their role. The Cleveland Clinic currently maintains over 500 groups within Send Word Now.

From Incident Response to Everyday Communications

The clinic uses the communication technology of Send Word Now for more than incident response.

Managers are using Send Word Now to broadcast messages to nurses about the need for additional staff on the floor. Send Word Now is also used to send critical messages to nursing stations.

For example, if the hospital expects a surge of incoming patients due to an emergency situation in the community, managers can rapidly share details with nursing management teams across the organization. This advanced messaging technology started as a part of the Cleveland Clinic Adopt incident response system but has moved beyond that single use case to support more efficient communication in day-to-day hospital activities. Of course, while technical features, such as reliability and scalability, are important, the Cleveland Clinic also evaluated the human interaction and user experience factors of Send Word Now. They found nurses welcomed the new capabilities that were not available in their prior communications system. And system administrators make use of role-based administration; a small number of system administrators can manage the entire Send Word Now platform at the Cleveland Clinic while administrators in hospitals and departments can attend to the needs of their groups.

Send Word Now demonstrates that incident response communications technology can improve communication during emergency situations and can improve communications in day-to-day operations as well.

