

GUIDE FOR GOVERNMENT

10

**OVERLOOKED
APPLICATIONS
OF MASS
NOTIFICATIONS
FOR LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS**

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Introduction

Cities and county governments are responsible for informing, protecting and improving the lives of community members, and communication is a key component in creating a sound and involved community. Effective communication during an emergency can safeguard lives, and everyday notifications can improve community participation and build trust in local government.

Several local governments and municipalities have implemented a mass notification system to improve their communications with citizens. This more advanced method of communicating with the public has many benefits, from streamlining the communication process, speeding the delivery time of messages, reaching people where they are, providing local and relevant information and much more.

In this guide, we will discuss ten ways counties and cities have used mass notification systems in ways that may not be on the radar.

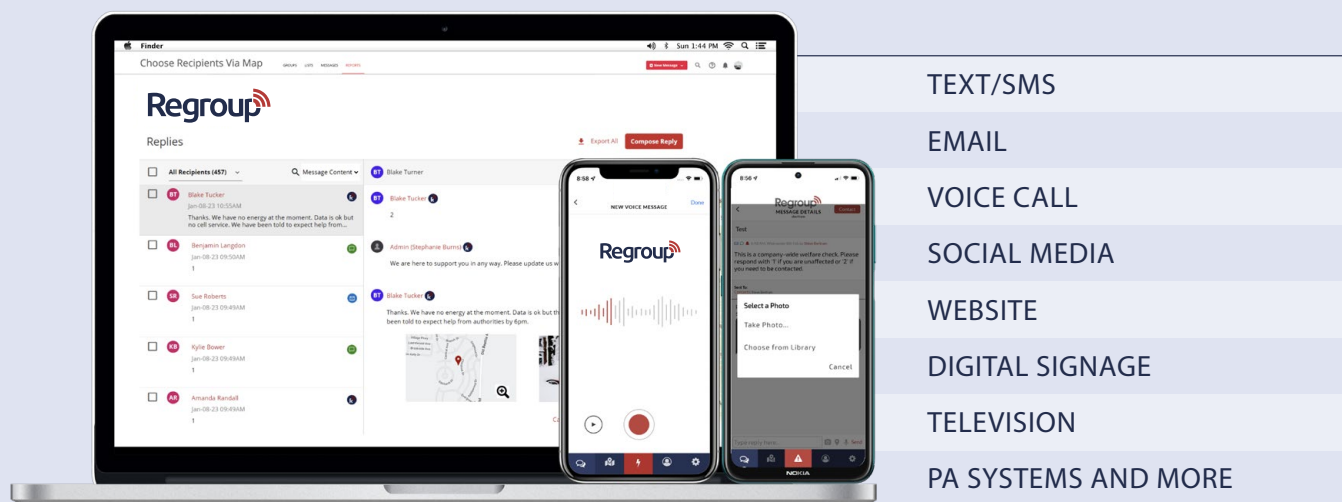


10 Overlooked Applications of Mass Notification for Local Governments

1. Emergency notifications

Local governments and public safety officials have a duty to inform citizens of an impending emergency such as a natural disaster, evacuation or active-shooter situation. The key to saving lives and reducing damage during an emergency is providing relevant and important alerts to citizens as quickly as possible.

Many counties and cities have used mass notification systems (MNS) as the fastest and most efficient way to send alerts to the public to keep them safe in an emergency. A robust mass alert system should be able to broadcast emergency messages via:



A MNS should also be cloud-based and have multiple fail-safe features to ensure alerts can always be launched during a power outage or when communication lines are down.

A robust mass notification system can reach unsubscribed residents or those traveling in the area via the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). Some mass alert systems can also set automatic alerts from:

NOAA

IPAWS

ShakeAlert



Mass notification systems make it easier to send emergency alerts because messages can reach far more people almost instantaneously compared to traditional forms of communication.

For example, Regroup Mass Notification System provides messaging templates to send out important alerts in just two clicks. In addition, automatic emergency alerts can streamline and quicken the notification process and with no messaging limits, governments and public safety officials can reach a large audience with regular updates.

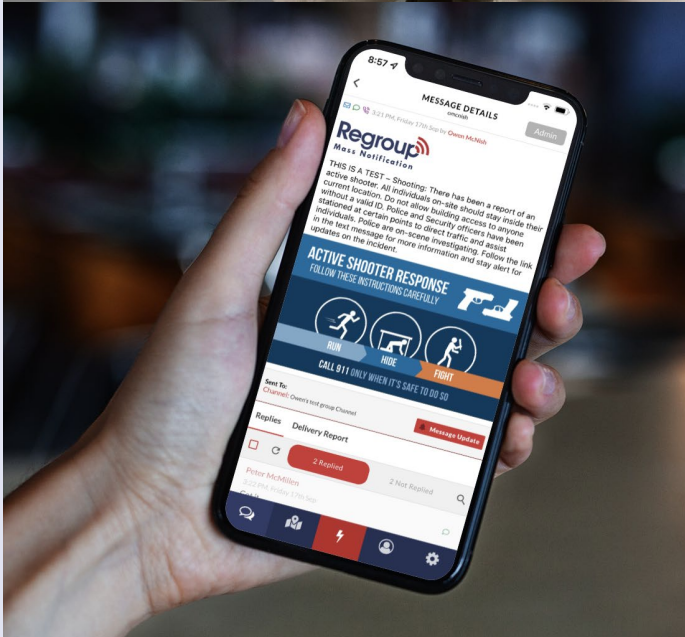
Other ways cities and counties use a MNS during an emergency include:

Promptly assembling a well-coordinated disaster response team.
Utilizing all available communication channels to inform and update the public.
Assisting with evacuations and establishing two-way communication channels.
Collecting essential information to identify areas requiring assistance and resources.
Issuing public safety announcements and missing persons and Amber alerts.
Providing notifications regarding utility and service disruptions.
Issuing alerts for first responders.

A mass notification system enables local governments to quickly disseminate crucial information and emergency alerts to citizens, potentially saving lives and mitigating damage.

2. Daily and routine communications

City and county governments must keep residents and staff informed on the latest developments in their communities. In turn, citizens look for government information every day. A mass notification system enables both local governments and citizens to stay informed of non-life-threatening information, helping improve communication and keep people informed.



Improved communication through one trusted source fosters positive civic experiences and promotes engagement. A mass communication system can build community in several ways, including:

- Building trust through one trusted source of communication.
- Integrating with social media to engage citizens and sharing of information.
- Provides citizens a way to engage with public administration, bridging the gap between the two and building participation and cooperation.
- Citizens can choose the notifications they want to receive and avoid the ones they do not.
- Raise awareness about key issues and important changes.

Local governments have used mass notification systems for daily communications, such as:

Important dates such as elections and tax deadlines	Policy and code changes
Road closures and traffic updates	Volunteer and job postings
Tree trimming, construction updates and utility servicing	Meeting reminders, agendas and minutes
Community events	Payment reminders
Feedback on proposals	Holiday schedule changes/updates

Clear, effective communication from the government to citizens makes a difference. Every interaction provides an opportunity to foster positive civic experiences and encourage civic participation.

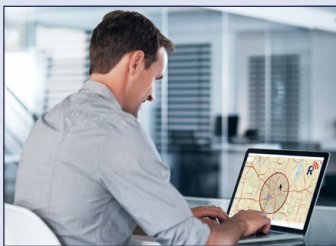


3. Local and relevant information

Today, citizens rely on several sources for local information and news. According to a Pew Research Center study, most adults follow what is happening in their local communities no matter what size community they live in. However, with news staff budgets declining and local community news increasingly covered by national media organizations, in-depth local news is lacking.

Mass communication systems can fill the gap in relaying local and relevant news to citizens in a specific city or county. Not only do these systems allow administrators to send notifications and reports directly to citizens that sign up for them, but a robust system will also come equipped with technology that makes it easier to disseminate local information to those who need it most.

For example, The Regroup Mass Notification system comes equipped with several features that make targeting messages to local citizens more accessible and more advanced, including:



G E O F E N C I N G

keep everyone safe and informed based on a recipient’s physical location, including entry and exit messages for people who are traveling in and out of a designated area.



Q U I C K C O N F E R E N C E

A quick conferencing tool can gather local information from people on the ground. Especially useful during emergencies, Quick Conference is a way to gather people quickly into a live meeting to share local information and decide the next steps in real-time.



U S E R F R I E N D L Y I N T E R F A C E

The Regroup system is easy to use for people of all technical abilities to send out local news and updates. Community events, property assessment deadlines, meetings, building code changes and more can be sent through a user-friendly interface. In addition, Regroup provides comprehensive administrative tools that help administrators easily measure delivery success rates, maintain accurate contact databases and create paper trails.

Mass communication systems help bridge the gap in transmitting localized and pertinent news to residents within a city or county. A comprehensive system is an advanced way to simplify the sending of local information to those who need it the most.



4. Eliminating Red Tape

Red tape is a phrase often associated with government bureaucracy, and mass notification systems can help dispel this belief. Obtaining permits, contacting local government administrators and providing feedback on proposed plans are just some ways a mass communication system can streamline these processes, eliminating the need for citizens to make multiple attempts at finding the information they need.

For those on the government administration side, integrating a mass communication system should be easy and flexible and reduce the time and effort to implement a new system.

Managing contact data is simple with Regroup's optional API integration, which automatically syncs employee records, citizen contact information and more with the existing database. These integrations reduce the time and money spent on messaging-related tasks and accelerates the delivery of daily notifications and critical alerts.

T Y P E S O F I N T E G R A T I O N S	
Notification Hardware	Send potentially life-saving alerts across your organization's infrastructure and technology, including PA systems, digital signage, fire panels and more.
Desktop Alert Solutions	Desktop Alerts provide a solution for immediately capturing the employees' attention with on-screen, pop-up notification displays on their desktops.
Databases and Information Systems	Regroup integrates with most of the leading databases and information systems, including employee record management, HR and payroll systems.
National Weather Service / NOAA Alerts	Automatically broadcast real-time, location-based NWS watches and warnings, prime wildfire conditions and more to alert your citizens across multiple channels.
Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS)	The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) enables federal, state and local alerting authorities to use IPAWS to send warnings and alerts to the public. Regroup's integration allows approved organizations to receive and automate the sending of IPAWS alerts to recipients.



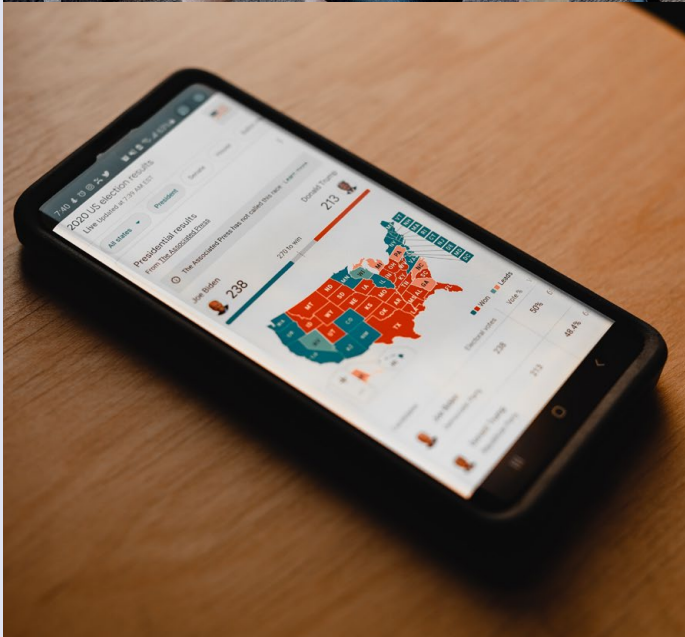
5. Improve staffing

A mass notification system can be used to keep employees safe and improve work efficiency among staff. For example, local governments have used mass communication to send out emergency notifications in response to natural disasters, notifying employees of shift changes and collaborating on team projects. A mass notification system helps cities and county governments overcome communication challenges with dispersed workforces while simultaneously reducing overall costs and increasing ROI.

Some ways counties and cities use a mass notification system to improve staffing include:

Posting job opportunities
Manage staffing needs and schedule changes
Communicate important information and policy updates to staff
Meeting notices or changes in event schedules
Improving communication with employees in the field
Coordinating efforts with emergency staff and first responders

More expedient than more traditional means of communication, mass notification tools can help local governments improve staffing concerns, communicate with decentralized teams, reduce costs and promote workplace efficiency.



6. Engage citizens

A mass communication system allows local governments to communicate with citizens better and faster during an emergency and improves engagement by making information and important updates more accessible.

Citizens become more engaged in their communities when they are informed and part of the political process. However, it is challenging for residents to get the information they need to make this happen. A mass notification system can solve this problem by providing one solution.

Instead of citizens calling administration offices or conducting an internet search to get the information they need, citizens can join a mass communication system through easy text-to-join options. Messages can be sent through one source in multiple ways, such as text, voicemail or email. Residents still have the option to enroll in specific groups or opt out of receiving communications at any time. A mass notification system can also alleviate the number of requests from citizens for contact numbers, public record requests or meeting times and agendas.

Below are some examples of how county and city governments have used mass notification systems to improve citizen engagement:

Providing life-saving emergency alerts	Handling of public records requests
Receiving suspicious activity reports from citizens	Directly connecting citizens to the correct department
Obtaining information about needed repairs to roads and utility lines	Job postings and volunteer opportunities
Communicating meeting and event times, agendas and minutes	Voting information
Updates on building requirements and planning and policy changes	Holiday schedule changes

A mass communication system can grow community engagement by keeping people informed and safe.



7. Multilingual

Most local governments in the United States speak and operate in English. However, almost 20% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home, according to a study by the U.S. Census Bureau. A mass notification system equipped with automatic translation can increase the effectiveness of your emergency alerts and routine notifications by ensuring that everyone in your local area understands your message when they receive it.

Regroup's Automatic Message Translation allows administrators to automatically translate notifications into over 75 languages based on their recipients' preferred settings.

Translating messages into the language spoken at home will increase the effectiveness of your emergency notifications to keep people safe.

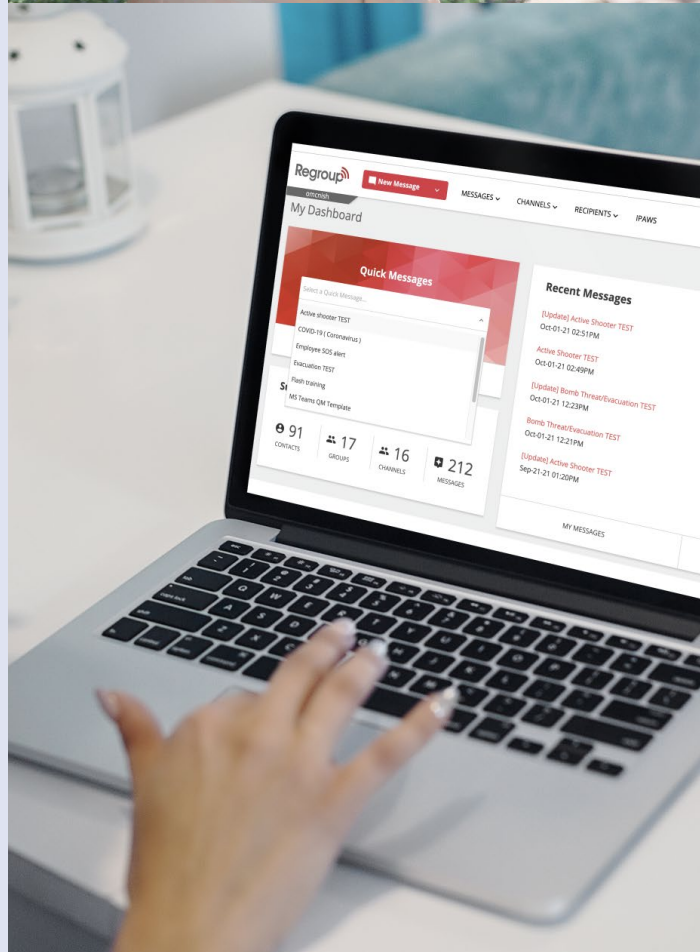
8. Build groups to target messaging

Equally as important as sending critical alerts quickly, is the need to avoid over-communicating irrelevant information. A comprehensive mass notification system should allow administrators to create groups so specific messages are sent only to those citizens who have subscribed to receive notifications or to staff members for whom the message is pertinent to their job.

Administrators can create different groups to target messages and push them out to only those who specifically need them. At the same time, you can send messages to all groups at once to ensure the wide dissemination of a critical alert.

Administrators can organize their accounts to match their organizational hierarchy and prepare unlimited templates for fast emergency and routine messaging, such as road closures and severe weather warning alerts.

Governments can better alert entire groups of people when issues arise, including workers and community members.





9. Two-way communication

A local government's approach to mass communication should be more than just a means of disseminating information and updates that your departments believe are relevant to citizens. Instead, it should involve actively listening and responding to the sentiments and concerns of citizens and leveraging opportunities to address topics that interest them.

Continually offering opportunities for two-way dialogue, answering questions and soliciting feedback will foster greater citizen engagement. A mass communication system equipped with two-way communication provides citizens with this very tool. In addition, two-way reporting allows citizens who witness an emergency or have relevant local news and information to inform authorities using one platform.

Two-way communication can be helpful for city and county governments in several ways, including:



Publishing updates that align with citizens' interests

Conducting listening sessions, surveys and polls to receive direct feedback

Registering for government events and city council meetings

Addressing concerns and receiving feedback on proposed plans

Anonymous reporting of suspicious activity

Reporting safety hazards and submitting requests for road and utility repairs

A successful mass communication strategy entails creating a space for citizens to participate actively in their community.




10. Customer Service

Working in government means serving citizens, the ultimate display of customer service. Customer service often makes up the backbone of an organization. A mass notification system is an easy tool for government organizations to use to improve the customer service they provide to their citizens.

Mass notification systems can provide citizens a better way to get and receive the information they need, often automating many heavy-lifting administrative tasks that burden government administrations. For example, a mobile app can provide department phone numbers so citizens can go to one place for reliable information.

Other ways mass notification systems enable governments to provide improved customer service include:

	Real-time responses to citizen requests
	Providing a means of receiving feedback and input from citizens
	Automatically sending information about changes in operating hours or closures
	Protecting citizens' contact information they've submitted to the system
	Bridging the gap between government and citizens with enhanced communication
	Modernizing traditional communication methods for an improved experience

Just as customer service is the ultimate act of serving the community, a mass notification company should serve its clients well. A well-equipped MNS should provide 24/7 support, training and assistance with integration.

Conclusion

County and city governments must communicate with citizens to prepare them for a wide range of events, such as severe weather, active shooters and routine events and updates. At the same time, citizens need a better way of getting and receiving the information they need most and providing feedback to government officials to improve their engagement within the community.

To ensure essential information is conveyed promptly and effectively to residents, staff and emergency personnel, regardless of the device used, local governments can use mass notification and alert software as a reliable and user-friendly communication solution.

A mass notification system allows local government leaders several benefits, including disseminating time-sensitive information to as many people and channels as possible, allowing them to reach their constituents easily.





About Regroup Mass Notification System

Since 2006, Regroup Mass Notification has provided an easy-to-use but robust mass alert platform for education, health care, business and government. Our genesis is in higher education with university clients throughout North America.

We've continually helped develop risk assessment plans for client colleges and universities and have worked to improve our mass notification platform to serve these clients.

Regroup has been recognized as a leading provider of security technology by the Secure Campus Awards, American Security Today, DRI International and Unified Communications. Our cloud-based, multi-channel mass notification platform integrates with popular educational tools, the National Weather Service and NOAA and provides rapid two-way communication through the Regroup Mobile App. For over 16 years, institutes of higher learning have turned to Regroup for their emergency and everyday communication.

You can learn more about us at regroup.com or schedule a demonstration of the Regroup platform at regroup.com/demo.

Regroup Mass Notification

www.regroup.com

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