Using Mass Notification Systems for COVID-19 Messaging in Connecticut
Last Updated 10/26/2020

As we work together across the state to control the spread of the COVID-19 during this public health emergency, we wanted to remind municipalities and tribal nations that the Everbridge emergency notification system is available to assist you with notifying residents of a local outbreak of COVID-19 and local COVID-19 testing availability. These emergency notification systems must be used for emergency situations which are defined as events that create an immediate threat to life, safety or property. COVID-19 community outbreaks meet this definition. Every effort should be made to make sure these databases are used properly, and are not overused, to ensure continued community trust and subscribership in these critical systems.

There are multiple levels of messaging services in Connecticut.

- **Level 1: CTALERT – E911 by Everbridge**
    - This is the master State of Connecticut account for emergency notifications. This list is offered to all municipalities to use through their PSAPs.
    - CTALERT contains the E911 Database and those who have elected to receive CTALERT messages; use is restricted to the immediate threat to one's life safety or property, which includes messaging related to a COVID outbreak.

- **Level 2: Community Mass Notification by Everbridge**
    - A community may have purchased additional Everbridge services and added, through a sign-up portal, their own contacts. Some communities in Connecticut have their own Everbridge systems in place.

- **Level 3: 3rd Party**
    - A small number of communities have purchased / contracted with a different provider service (non-Everbridge) for messaging.

Towns that have their own separate alerting systems are certainly able to send the messages on their own; however if they are going to use the 911 database (**Level 1**), the procedure below should be followed. Also, it is recommended that even a town that is using its own system run the message through this procedure, in order to continue to provide standardized statewide messaging.

Kevin McManus is the current point of contact for Everbridge in Connecticut; he will provide direct assistance for **Level 1 (CT Alert – E911 by Everbridge system)** messaging. Additionally, he can provide case by case support for **Level 2 (Community Mass Notification by Everbridge)** messaging. Kevin can be contacted at Kevin.McManus@everbridge.com. Messaging utilizing **Level 3 (3rd Party),** is the responsibility of the local community – the draft template below can be used for this purpose, and the town may feel free to run its messaging by Kevin for standardization of message.

Standard Operating Procedure:

If a municipality/tribal nation is conducting a testing initiative within its community and wants to use **Everbridge (Level 1 and Level 2)** to get the message out, the following procedure should be used:

1. The community (after approval by the local Chief Executive Officer/Unified Command) provides a script of the COVID-19 Testing/Alert notification to the Everbridge Point of Contact (at this time, Kevin McManus) and to the DEMHS Regional Coordinator;
   1. The notification should include date, times, location, who should be tested, and cost if any;
   2. The notification will include a reminder to wear your mask and maintain social distancing from anyone living outside of your home;
2. The community will, if available, post the message on their municipal website;
   1. This will allow for the Everbridge Text and Email message to point to a link with full message details.
3. If the community has a HOTLINE or other similar number, (or if 2-1-1 has been notified), this will be included in the notification;
4. The Everbridge POC (Kevin) will craft and send the notification to the location area:
5. Copies of the message will be provided to the PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point, or dispatch center), DEMHS Regional Coordinator, and other individuals based on the particular community;
   1. This may include the local emergency management director, the health department or district.
6. Certain features such as business locations and yellow page lists will be omitted from the notification;
7. A single (one and done) notification will be sent for that testing period, in order to reduce the likelihood of confusion or "message fatigue".

Below you will find sample message templates for your use; feel free to revise this template for your needs.

Draft Emergency Notification Alert Templates
(If you are using Everbridge, please follow the procedure outlined above)

I.   **Draft Voice Message, Red Alert: 30-45 Seconds Max**
 [THE TOWN/CITY OF ----] has seen an increase in positive COVID-19 cases, and the Department of Public Health has issued an alert. Please get tested, wear a mask, and increase social distancing. Find a free test at www.ct.gov/prioritytesting.

II.   **Draft Email, Red Alert: 2500 characters or less**

[GREETING],

It is [TIME] on [DAY], [MONTH] [DATE], and this is a COVID-19 update for [TOWN/CITY]. We have seen an increase in positive COVID-19 cases, and the Department of Public Health has issued an alert.

We have had [number] new positive cases since our last update on [date].

[ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT CASES, FOR EXAMPLE]: Three of these new cases are residents under the age of 30.]

[ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT WHERE THE VIRUS IS SPREADING, FOR EXAMPLE]: Our contact tracing efforts show that these cases are a result of community spread, but that there is no evidence of transmission in our schools, or day care centers.]

[TESTING INFORMATION, FOR EXAMPLE: In addition to the new positive cases, we have also reported (number) negative tests since our last update.]

[TESTING SITE INFORMATION, FOR EXAMPLE: In order to stop the spread of COVID-19 it's critical that you get tested – even if you're no showing symptoms. Information about testing locations and upcoming testing events in (town) can be found on our website at (link). You can also find the testing site nearest to you by visiting www.ct.gov/coronavirus and typing in your zip code.]

- Find a free test at www.ct.gov/prioritytesting.

[ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM HEALTH DEPARTMENT, IF NEEDED. FOR EXAMPLE]: Our Health Director urges residents to report positive cases directly to our health department in order to facilitate rapid contact tracing to assist in keeping schools open and operating safely. The Health Department office phone number is (number).]

As a reminder, the common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

The complete list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found on the CDC website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html.

Please remember if you are symptomatic, get tested, and stay home from work or school.

We again remind all residents to continue to practice social distancing when out in public, wear masks when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash or sanitize hands frequently especially after contact with public surfaces.

Thank you, and stay safe.

[SIGNATURE]

III.   Draft Text, Red Alert: 120 characters or less

COVID-19 cases in [TOWN/CITY] are increasing. The Department of Public Health has issued an alert. Please get tested, and get more information at [LINK TO WEBSITE WITH MORE INFORMATION]. Find a free test at www.ct.gov/prioritytesting.