



For Immediate Release

February 22, 2006

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WHAT: EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM EXERCISE YIELDS POSITIVE RESULTS FOR PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

WHO: TWENTY FIRST CENTURY COMMUNICATIONS and FRANKLIN COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The emergency notification system employed by the city of Columbus, the Ohio State University and the Franklin County Commissioners debuted on Tuesday, October 4, 2005 and proved to be very successful in the opinion of Art Baker, Emergency Manager for Warning of the Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security. "We were more than pleased with the results of this exercise. We called over 37,000 residences and businesses in the Franklin County area and reached over 80% with our message. The remaining 20% were either busy signals or no one answered. If the system reached an answering machine a message was left. All in all, it performed exactly as expected."

The Exercise

The goal of the exercise was to test, under field conditions, Franklin County's Emergency Notification System using Twenty First Century Communications' Universal Communications System (UCS). The test objective was to rapidly call approximately 40,000 Franklin County (Ohio) telephone numbers; representing a population of roughly 140,000 individuals. The call process would be initiated at one time by use of the UCS geocoded mapping tool. The exercise served to enable the Franklin County EMA to test the system and to educate the public as to its availability.

Exercise Participants

- ❖ The Franklin County Emergency Management Agency – the primary message initiator and co-purchaser of the UCS system.
- ❖ The Ohio State University – a notification initiator and co-purchaser of the UCS system.
- ❖ SBC Communications – the local exchange carrier serving Franklin County.
- ❖ Twenty First Century Communications (TFCC) – the developer of the UCS and provider of the notification system infrastructure.

Exercise Procedure

The Emergency Manager for Warning of the Franklin County EMA, Art Baker, initiated the outdial message, using the UCS geocoded mapping system to designate 18 target areas inside Franklin County to be notified. This was accomplished by drawing a variety of polygons on a web-based map using the UCS mapping tool. Having the mapping tool to identify addresses within the target areas, the UCS then extracted the contact phones numbers to be dialed.

At the time of the test, Ohio did not permit the 911 telephone database to be made available to the county emergency management agencies. A public 411 database was used to generate the contact phone numbers. The database used in this exercise was updated every 24 hours by both the Franklin County EMA and TFCC. However, unlisted and non-published numbers are not included in 411 databases. Therefore these numbers were omitted from the test.

The message to be delivered was then recorded by the EMA: ***“This is a test of the Franklin County Emergency Notification System. This is only a test.”***

The outdial process was initiated shortly after 2:00 PM, and completed approximately 15 minutes later. As calls were complete, the call results were displayed as numbers in a pie chart and on the UCS mapping tool. Although UCS permits the client to set the number of call attempts, only one call attempt was made to each telephone number.

The test was successful in that all systems performed as expected. 37,118 actual calls were accomplished. The difference from the 40,000 call figures resulted from populations estimates being used for the designated contact areas.

“Now, we’re ready to move into the next phase of our plan,” stated Baker. Phase Two involves the establishment of a page on the Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security web site (www.emafc.com) that will allow residents who only have cell phones or unlisted numbers to sign up for emergency calls. “This is important because so many people have unlisted home phone numbers or use their cell phones for personal home use instead of the more traditional land-line phone service. In these cases, we have no way of reaching these people unless they register their phone numbers with us. That’s why we’ve created this secure registration web site,” Baker said.

Exercise Findings

- ❖ **Capacity**. The local exchange carrier experienced no problems with central office overload despite the level of call traffic delivered by the UCS platform. The ratio of busy signals and network intercepts (approximately 20%) was consistent with normal traffic for that time of day. The telephone network is robust enough to withstand the high volume of outdial call traffic without network intercepts.
- ❖ **Inbound Capability**. Although the outdial message clearly stated the exercise calls were part of a test involving the Franklin County Emergency Notification System, a large number of inbound calls to the Franklin County EMA were generated in response to the exercise. This supports the studies that, during an actual event, 2 to 3 inbound calls arise from every 5 outdial calls. The ability to process inbound call traffic is absolutely essential to avoid inbound congestion from calls resulting from an outdial campaign.
- ❖ **911 Versus 411 Data**. A 411 database was used rather than a 911 database. As a result; unlisted/non-published telephone numbers were not called. In an actual event, this would be a potentially life threatening problem. Unlike 911 data, 411 telephone numbers may contain multiple addresses for the same number, such as in pizza delivery outlets, hair salons, chain outlets, school systems, etc. Although a single call was made to the number in the target area, the results displayed on the map system showed results outside the target area. Again, this points out the superiority of 911 over 411 data. A law was passed by the Ohio Legislature in late January making Ohio 911 data available to county emergency management agencies.

As a result of the valuable information gathered from the test, TFCC had adopted a similar high volume exercise as a standard practice with all contracted clients.

Universal Communications System (UCS)

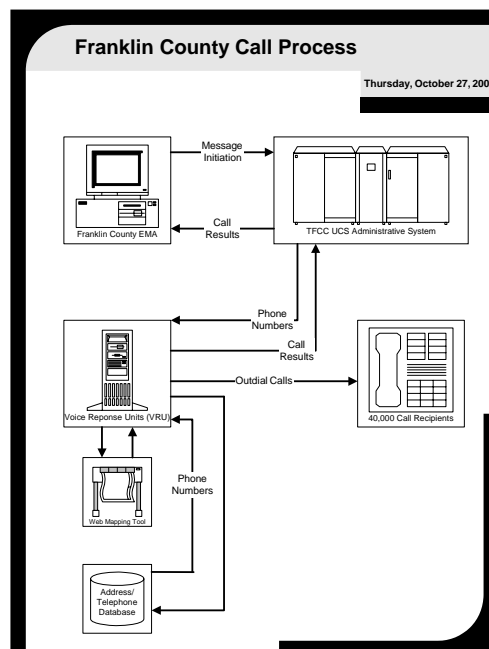
The Universal Communications System (UCS) used in the exercise on October 4 was developed by Columbus-based Twenty First Century Communications (TFCC). It is a high-speed telephone emergency notification system which has the largest call handling capability in North America. Originally developed to help electric utility customers report power outages, the system has been refined to reach millions of people instantly and serves government agencies, public safety entities, businesses and other participating organizations.

Systems like UCS are gaining wider use by local governments to alert residents in the event of an emergency, threat, or crisis as well as to check on health and safety. Calls can be tailored to a specific street or set of blocks, as in the case of a hazardous waste spill, or to check on a particular population, like the well-being of senior citizens during extremely hot or cold weather. In addition to sending outbound emergency notification, the system also handles simultaneous inbound calls from hotlines, get information lines, and lines used to report damage.

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