

PUBLIC INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 3.

DATE OF MEETING: January 19, 2010

REQUESTED BY: Charles Newman, Interim Emergency Management Director

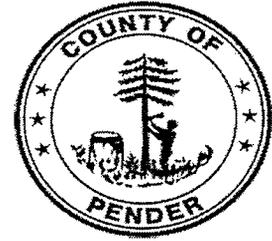
SHORT TITLE: Update on Pender County's Emergency Notification System "Connect-CTY"

BACKGROUND: In the County's 2009-2010 Budget the Board of County Commissioners approved funding for a Reverse 911 notification system. The Emergency Management Office is pleased to announce the launch of the *Connect-CTY*® service, a county-to-resident notification system. With this service, county leaders can send detailed voice messages to residents and businesses within minutes with specific information about time-sensitive or common-interest issues such as emergencies and local community matters. The *Connect-CTY* service will be used to supplement our current communication plans and augment public safety/first responder services.

The Emergency Management Office began implementation of the system in August of 2009. All residential and business public access numbers have been added to the system and are available to receive notifications. The public may register for this service via the County Website's (www.pendercountync.gov/cty.aspx or PenderEM.com). Once registered, subscribers may add additional numbers, such as mobile and pager numbers to receive emergency information, as well.

Not only will this system be used for emergency purposes, but for Public Utilities notifications and internal purposes, as well. Attached is our *Connect-CTY*® policy, FAQ's and press release.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE
Activation of the Connect CTY Telephone Notification System



Effective: Immediately
Submitted by: Charles Newman, Interim Emergency Management Director
Approved by: Rick Benton, County Manager

PURPOSE:

To provide a guideline for the use of the County's CONNECT-CTY Telephone notification system for the notification and alerting the public of issues of health, safety, and welfare and of problems relating to major events and/or incidents.

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of Pender County Government to notify the residents and businesses within the County when the need arises, such as emergencies.

Activation of the notification system shall occur solely at the discretion of the County Manager. Whenever use of the notification system is proposed, the County Manager or designee shall make a determination whether the circumstances presented warrant activation. If, after evaluation of the known facts and circumstances regarding the incident/situation which led to the request, the County Manager or designee concludes the proposed activation is warranted, necessary and appropriate, he/she shall authorize activation of the notification system in conformance with these procedures. In most situations CONNECT-CTY will not be warranted.

Although community members have the opportunity to not participate in this calling notification system, the County strongly encourages all community members to be a part of this initiative in order to receive prompt and valuable information.

This Standard Operating Procedures consists of the following numbered sections:

- 1. Definitions**
- 2. Intra-departmental Notifications**
- 3. Notifications**
- 4. Activation Procedures**
- 5. Use of Notification by Outside Agencies**
- 6. Notification Cancellations**
- 7. Notification Reports and Error Rates**

PROCEDURES:

1. DEFINITIONS

Call-Card Notifications - Notifications made from a telephone utilizing an access code and password. This would allow the person making the notification to do so from anywhere where computer access is limited or not available. These notifications would be for emergencies and exigent circumstances.

Public Information Notifications - Notifications sent to businesses or residences to the primary telephone number listed. Notifications under this format will not go to secondary telephone numbers (ie. cell phones, office, etc.), nor will they go to listed E-mail addresses. These notifications are for the purpose of relaying information to the public, but not in an emergency protocol.

Department Director - County Manager, Emergency Management Director, Health Director, Information Technology Services Director. Sheriff, Utilities Director and/or designees.

Group Notifications - Notifications sent to pre-determined call groups. These groups include but are not limited to banks, restaurants, hotels, residents with disabilities, seniors, etc....

Intra-departmental Notifications - Notifications originated and authorized by the County Manager, Department Directors and/or designee for distribution to employees and staff members of their respective departments.

Priority Notifications - Notifications sent to businesses or residences to **ALL** telephone numbers and E-mail addresses listed on the contact page. These messages will receive "priority" protocol by the system and take precedent over Public Information and Single Survey notifications. These notifications are to be used in emergency or exigent situations only.

Single-Survey Notification - These notifications have the capability of allowing the call recipient to respond to a question or survey by pushing a key(s) on the telephone set. The call would only be issued to the primary telephone number. These types of notifications serve the County by sending and receiving information and citizen feedback in a timely manner.

2. INTRA-DEPARTMENTAL NOTIFICATIONS

A. Call groups can be established on a department by department basis as determined by the Department Directors with the consent of the County Manager. These groups could include but are not limited to:

- Board of Commissioners
- Sheriff's Office
- Public Works Division teams (ie. snow plow personnel)
- Department and Division Directors;
- County Boards and Commissions;
- and other such call groups as authorized by the County Manager or Department Director.

- B. It shall be up to the individual Department Director to establish their own internal policies determining call-out/notification procedures as approved by the County Manager.
- C. Intra-departmental notifications utilizing the CONNECT-CTY System are not to take the place of normal written communications nor shall they take the place of County e-mail and voicemail communications among employees.

3. NOTIFICATIONS

A. Examples of Priority Notifications:

The following, non-exclusive listing reflects the types of conditions for which either full or limited (directed only toward specific groups and/or particular affected areas of the County) Priority Notifications *might* be deemed to be warranted, depending on the particular circumstances presented:

- Extraordinary/unanticipated results of severe weather conditions;
- Extraordinary Flood warnings;
- Natural disasters;
- Extraordinary/unanticipated conditions following natural disasters such as an earthquake;
- Confirmed terrorist threats or activity;
- Road closures with anticipated limited access to properties as a result of scheduled construction;
- Missing persons/Amber Alerts affecting County residents;
- Imminent danger from fire;
- Hazardous material incidents affecting County business or residents;
- Bomb threats, after assessment of risk;
- Hostage situations;
- Criminal manhunts;
- Water boil orders;
- Construction updates, based upon unanticipated conditions encountered;
- Crime alerts and watches;
- Power outages, if they are anticipated to extend for 24 hours or greater;
- Vicious, fierce or dangerous animals running at large, in County;
- Non-routine special meeting notices;
- Other life-threatening situations.

- B. Non-emergency, non life-threatening public notifications. These are notifications that must be made in a timely manner but not immediately. These notifications must be authorized by any two of the following: County Manager or Department Director prior to being made. This allows ample time to review the call area, call audience, call message, and other pertinent information.
- C. Priority Notification and time-sensitive notifications. Whenever Priority Notification is deemed warranted, appropriate and necessary in light of known information and circumstances presented, the Notification System will be activated in a reasonably timely manner, taking into account the need to: (1) ensure the accuracy and integrity of the informational content of the notification, (2) avoid unduly alarming the public, and (3) balance the urgency of the situation with the time of day that such conditions are encountered. Unless there is a compelling reason to

the contrary, the Notification System shall not be used to distribute a Priority Notification between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. If, in the opinion of the County Manager or designee, a Priority Notification must be made after 10:00 p.m. or prior to 6:00 a.m., the County Manager or designee shall notify and confer with the Chairman of the Board, before the Notification System is activated. In an emergency situation, when time is of the utmost importance, the following additional persons are authorized to activate or request activation of the notification system:

- Emergency Management Director
- Health Director
- Sheriff

D. Upon activation of the notification system, the County Manager, Board of Commissioners, and the respective Department Director will be notified of the activation as soon as possible.

4. **USE OF NOTIFICATION SYSTEM BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

In extraordinary, emergency or exigent circumstances, the County Manager, Chairman of the Board or other governmental units, including but not limited to Town of Burgaw, Town of Surf City, Town of Topsail Beach and the State of North Carolina, may request that the County Manager activate the County's Notification System for a Priority Notification. Whenever such use of the Notification System is proposed, the County Manager or designee shall make a determination whether the circumstances presented warrant activation in conformance with these policies and procedures.

5. **ACTIVATION PROCEDURES**

Activation of the CONNECT-CTY system must be authorized by the County Manager or his/her designees, regardless of the type of activation. All notifications shall be brief and provide pertinent information about the subject matter, including possibly where to obtain further information about the subject matter.

- A. **In-house Notification Activations.** Those notifications made from within any of the County's facilities utilizing the Internet activation system.
- B. **Remote Notification Activations.** Those notifications made remotely or from outside of the County utilizing the Internet activation system.
- C. **CONNECT-CTY Notification Activations.** Those notifications requested by an authorized County employee but made by personnel from the CONNECT-CTY office.
- D. **Call-Card Notifications.** Notifications made from a telephone/cell phone when access to the Internet is limited or unavailable.

6. **ACTIVATION CANCELLATIONS**

Not all activations require the issuance of a cancellation notification. Examples of activations that **DO NOT** require a cancellation notification are:

- Severe Weather Conditions;
- Flood Warnings;
- Natural Disasters;
- Construction Updates;
- Crime Alerts and Watches;
- Power Outages;
- Special Meeting Notices;

Examples of activations that **DO** require a cancellation notification are:

- Missing Persons/Amber Alerts;
- Imminent Danger from Fire;
- Hazardous Material Incidents;
- Bomb Threats;
- Hostage Situations;
- Criminal Manhunts;
- Potable Water Boil Orders;
- Vicious, Fierce or Dangerous Animals Running at Large;
- Road Closures;
- Terrorist Threats or Activity;

7. **NOTIFICATION REPORTS AND ERROR RATES**

At the conclusion of each notification, a written report detailing the notification times, non-working telephone numbers and missed-calls will be provided to the County Manager. The report shall be distributed to the County Manager and appropriate Department Directors. The reports shall be reviewed to determine if the notifications were timely and effective. The Emergency Management Office shall be responsible for updates to the contact information, as appropriate and available. The primary phone number of each household and business will be updated on a monthly basis by the CONNECT-CTY system downloads.

Each County resident and business shall also have the opportunity to update their personal information such as land line telephone number, cellular number, and email address via a web site link.

Connect-CTY®
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the *Connect-CTY* service?

The **Connect-CTY** service allows authorized civic leaders to create and rapidly disseminate time-sensitive messages to every telephone number stored in the notification database. With the **Connect-CTY** service, authorized users can send thousands of messages in minutes. Only authorized officials are allowed access to the system.

How does the service work?

Authorized officials record a voice message that is then delivered quickly to individual phones in the notification database.

What types of messages will be sent using the service?

Any message regarding the safety or welfare of our community would be disseminated using the **Connect-CTY** service.

Examples would include severe weather warnings and updates, hazardous traffic or road conditions inside the county or affecting local routes, and any other situation that could impact the safety, property, or welfare of our citizens.

Does the *Connect-CTY* service replace other systems that have been used to provide time-sensitive information to residents?

This system is a significant enhancement to existing means of communication and is supplemental to, not a replacement for, the systems we have used in the past.

The call-in emergency information line **(910) 259-0200** will still be available. Also, TV, radio and our county web site will continue to broadcast important announcements.

Is my telephone number included in the notification database?

It is our intention and hope that every residence in our community be included in the notification database. To provide contact information, please visit the County's website at:

<http://www.pendercountync.gov/OnlineServices/ResidentNotificationSystem.aspx>

May I use a cell phone as my notification database listing?

Yes, we can accept cell phones in the database and encourage you to request that your number be included.

What precautions are being taken to protect personal information?

Connect-CTY® is a service of The NTI Group, Inc. (NTI). NTI takes security and privacy concerns very seriously and does not sell, trade, lease or loan any data about our clients to any third party. From a technical perspective, we utilize multiple physical and virtual layers of firewalls to maintain data security. *NTI* only

Connect-CTY®
Frequently Asked Questions

utilizes secure transmissions with its customers. No confidential information is ever transmitted between *NTI* and its customers using e-mail or FTP, but rather always utilizes either a VPN tunnel or SSL. Data is hosted in state-of-the-art facilities which require photo identification, thumb-print recognition, keyed access, and are manned 24/7 with full-security personnel. All data is encrypted prior to being placed on tape for offsite storage. *NTI* also retains an external, independent security firm to perform annual security audits.

Will there be a way to positively identify incoming calls which are made by the county using the system?

The caller-ID number for calls generated by the **Connect-CTY** service will be: **(910) 259-0200**. In addition, every message will begin with the same standard announcement: **“Hello, this is _____ calling with an important message from Pender County.”** The message content will follow this standard introduction.

Will the *Connect-CTY* service work if I have a call screening system on my phone?

There are several varieties of call screening devices which use differing protocols for screening. In general, the system has been found to work with these devices; but, some may require some type of pre-programming to allow our county's telephone number to pass through. We may conduct periodic tests to assure that messages are being delivered to numbers in the notification database.

If I am a non-resident home or condominium owner, what phone should be listed in the notification database?

For non-residents or owners who reside outside of our county, you may provide additional phone numbers to be included in our database to contact during certain situations. In general, calls are sent to the primary number only, but we also have the ability to call multiple numbers for each resident. Please contact our county office at **(910) 259-1210** or visit the county web site <http://www.pendercountync.gov/cty.aspx> to provide us with that information.

If I have provided more than one phone number, when will they be called?

Should a situation arise that requires us to contact you at multiple phone numbers, we can activate the system to place a simultaneous call to all of your numbers. In most cases, we will be sending calls only to one phone number.

My primary phone or my second listing is a cell phone with a non-local area code. Will the *Connect-CTY* service call numbers outside the area?

Yes. The area code does not impact whether or not a call is made.

How does the *Connect-CTY* system respond to busy signals or no-answer situations?

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Frequently Asked Questions

For busy signals, the call will be repeated several times in an attempt to reach you. The same is true for No-answer and Call-waiting. If the phone is answered by a message recorder, the message will be left on the answering device. If, after several attempts the call does not successfully go through, the system will stop attempting to call.

I am receiving county notification calls at my fax or my secondary phone line. Can I switch to have the system call my primary phone number?

Yes. Please contact us at **(910) 259-1210** to change the phone number in our notification database.

I was not able to listen to the entire call. Is there a way to repeat the message?

Yes, at the end of the message playback, simply press the star (*) key on your telephone to have it repeated in its entirety.

I answer the phone but the "Hello" message repeats. It then hangs up, calls back, and the same thing happens again. How can I hear the entire message?

Repeating or looping of messages happens when the system detects excessive noise in the background. This can be caused by loud radio/television volumes, people talking, or busy traffic noise. When you receive the next call, say "hello" once and turn down the volume of your radio/television or press the mute button on your telephone to allow full message delivery.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: January 19, 2010

MEDIA CONTACT:
Charles Newman
910-259-1210

Pender County Adopts Blackboard Connect to Improve Emergency Preparedness and Communication

County Encourages Residents to Update their Contact Information

[BURGAW, NC – January 19, 2010 – Pender County announced today it has launched the Blackboard Connect mass notification platform, enhancing community-wide communication and emergency preparedness. Pender County has implemented the Blackboard Connect platform so that county officials can directly notify, update and provide direction to the community in an efficient, timely manner, should a need arise.

With Blackboard Connect, officials can record, send and track personalized voice messages to thousands of residents, businesses, and local agencies in just minutes, through a single phone call. The county can also send text messages to cell phones, PDAs, e-mail accounts, and TTY/TDD receiving devices for the hearing impaired.

“Blackboard Connect will enable us to quickly send important, time-sensitive messages to residents and is a positive addition to our emergency preparedness and response plans,” said Charles Newman, Interim Emergency Management Director. “With Blackboard Connect, we can efficiently communicate with residents countywide, or just within affected neighborhoods, regarding any urgent issue, such as a severe storm or public health concern.”

County administrators can target each message to an unlimited number of groups – everything from mobilizing emergency response teams to coordinating efforts with necessary agencies or volunteers. Authorized users can also use a map on the Blackboard Connect system to contact specific geographical locations, sending messages only to the residents within select neighborhoods when needed.

“I strongly encourage residents to register their cell phones, private phone lines and e-mails addresses into the Blackboard Connect database so that they are ready to receive important, timely messages at any given time,” said Newman.

Publicly available primary residential and business phones in Pender County will automatically be included in the system. However, residents can opt-in to provide their complete information, which may include up to three phone numbers and two e-mail addresses and indicate if they have a TTY/TDD device. By visiting the Pender County Web site (www.pendercountync.gov/cty.aspx) and clicking on the link that says “SIGN UP NOW – SERVICES BY Connect CTY,” residents can enter their information into the secure database. In addition to signing up to receive county notifications, residents of Surf City and Topsail Beach can sign up to receive town-specific messages by visiting their town Web sites at <http://surfcity.govoffice.com> and <http://www.topsailbeach.org>, respectively, and adding their contact information. Those without Internet access can have their information added into the system

by calling 910-259-1210. Residents with call blocking services can make sure to receive the county's time-sensitive calls by adding 910-259-0200 to their approved number list.

"The best way to keep residents informed, and therefore safe, is through communication and the Blackboard Connect platform makes it easy," said Karl Engkvist, Executive Vice President of Blackboard Connect. "With the Blackboard Connect platform, administrators have a powerful tool to communicate quickly and efficiently with their community, without having to purchase new computers, software and telephone lines."

For more information on the Blackboard Connect platform please visit <http://www.blackboard.com/Alert-Notification/Connect-Platform.aspx> or contact the company at (818) 808-1789.

Additional Information about the Blackboard Connect Platform

The Blackboard Connect platform allows officials to send an unlimited number of messages, requires no additional hardware, and can be used from any computer with Internet access or telephone. This ensures that administrators can send vital messages from wherever they are located—even if they are evacuated. Additionally, officials receive detailed reports on contacts that did not receive a message, enabling them to follow up through alternative means as needed.

**Blackboard Connect Inc. does not sell, lease, share, or rent personally identifiable information (names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.) to any companies or persons outside of Blackboard or its service providers.*

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