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Things to Follow

When Selecting an Emergency Mass Notification System

Emergency mass notification system needs vary across organizations. As a result, the selection criteria can change drastically depending on the size and location of a college or university.

Despite the different challenges and solutions, there are a number of important factors that all educational institutions should keep in mind when selecting an emergency mass notification system.

Integration

Whether you already have an emergency notification system in place and are looking to expand or are considering longer-term future additions, considering the system's ability to integrate is essential. If your institution already has one or more products or systems in place, it's crucial that the new system work well with those components, not only for cost effectiveness but to **ensure a cohesive system overall**. Even if you're looking to implement a system for the first time, think long term. Your organization will more than likely expand the system at some point, whether it's with the same vendor or not.

Not considering the integration factor can cause problems down the road as you look to build out or add on to different system components.

Notification Coverage

Mass notification systems can range from simple to elaborate, and it's easy to fixate on specific services or products when reviewing the different offerings. Keep

the big picture in mind, and always come back to your end goal. What are you looking to achieve with your emergency mass notification system?

In many cases, the answer is comprehensive notification coverage.

Comprehensive notification coverage generally requires a variety of alerting methods to overcome obstacles that may prevent students, faculty, staff, or visitors from receiving an emergency alert. Where are students located when the emergency occurs? Do they have access to a computer or mobile device (and is it powered on)? Are they in an area where they can see or hear the alert? All of these are potential obstacles that can prevent your campus community from receiving an emergency alert.

The answer is to **adopt a system that provides multiple communication channels for sending and receiving an emergency alert**.

Alerting and Notifying

Ensuring that individuals are alerted to the fact that there is an emergency is important, but how do you go about providing specific information and instructions to students, faculty, staff, and visitors across multiple facilities?

Sounding a warning tone gets people's attention, but it does not convey information about the emergency at hand. Consider an emergency notification system that does both—sounds emergency tones/visible strobes and displays or speaks an emergency message that notifies individuals of the emergency and appropriate steps to ensure safety.

Code Compliance

Finally, be mindful of important mass notification codes and mandates when selecting an emergency notification system:

- **The Americans with Disabilities Act** specifies that emergency preparedness and response programs be accessible to people with disabilities, including emergency mass notification and access to information.
- **The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)** reauthorizes the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) and mandates under federal statutes that universities and colleges issue emergency warnings. The HEOA further establishes requirements for timely warning and emergency notification.
- In addition to its core focus on fire alarm systems, the **National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code (NFPA 72)** includes requirements for mass notification systems used for weather emergencies; terrorist events; biological, chemical, and nuclear emergencies; and other threats.



About AlertAware

AlertAware is a cost-effective and easy-to-use mass notification solution, offering more ways to activate, more ways to notify, and more than just notification. Founded upon 20+ years of experience in the world's highest-profile crisis events, AlertAware helps protect your organization from threats and keep your people and facilities safe and informed via SMS, email, social media, and more. **To learn more, visit www.alertaware.com.**