

NEWS RELEASE

City of Waxahachie Introduces New Notification System



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(October 5, 2010) The City of Waxahachie has implemented a new mass notification platform that will be used to alert residents of emergencies and other important information.

Waxahachie has adopted the Blackboard Connect platform so that city officials can directly notify, update and provide information to the community in an efficient, timely manner. Using the Blackboard Connect platform, officials can record, send and track personalized voice messages to businesses, local agencies, and the city's households in just minutes, through a single phone call. The city can also send text messages to cell phones, PDAs, e-mail accounts, and TTY/TDD receiving devices for the hearing impaired.

"Like the city's previous CODERED notification system, the new Blackboard Connect system will allow us to continue to communicate with residents and businesses quickly and directly in urgent situations," said Paul Stevens, city manager. "With the new system, we have the technology to reliably disseminate valuable information and updates in just a matter of minutes. Our community members can feel safe and rest assured that they will be informed quickly, should a need arise."

Some of the situations in which the notification system may be activated include, but are not limited to, severe weather, a missing child or elderly resident, flooding or other natural disaster or evacuation needs.

City administrators can target each message to an unlimited number of groups – everything from mobilizing volunteers to coordinating efforts with necessary agencies or emergency personnel. Specific geographical locations can also be selected, sending messages only to the residents within certain neighborhoods when needed.

“In addition to the phone calls, the city also now has the capability to send text and email messages with the new system,” said Amy Hollywood, community relations manager. “Adding text and email to the notification system will help ensure that residents receive messages, even when they are away from home,” said Hollywood.

Publicly available, primary residential and business phones in Waxahachie will automatically be included in the system. However, to ensure that the city has the most up-to-date contact information, residents should visit the city website at www.waxahachie.com and click on the Blackboard Connect link to provide their complete information. Residents can include up to three phone numbers, including cell phones, and two e-mail addresses. Hearing impaired residents can also indicate if they have a TTY/TDD device. Those without Internet access may pick up a form in person at City Hall, Sims Library, or either fire station to provide their up-to-date contact information.

“It is also important to note that the contact information will never be released or shared with any third-party entities. The information will be used for the sole purpose of keeping our residents and businesses informed,” said Hollywood.

For more information about the city of Waxahachie’s new notification system, please contact the community relations office at 972-937-7330, ext. 284.

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