



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
September 8, 2015**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item # 4

SUBJECT: Receive a report on the recent California Water Service Company Boil Water Order and notification to residents

BACKGROUND

On Sunday, July 26, 2015, the following events occurred: 1) California Water Service Company (CalWater) issued a Boil Water Order for a portion of the Los Altos community; 2) a Council member received notification from a resident about contamination in the water system and notified the City Manager who asked staff to gather information about the water contamination event and location; and 3) CalWater notified the Police Department that its staff would be going door-to-door to notify residents of the water incident and would supply a map of the affected properties to the Police Department.

On Monday, July 27, 2015, staff continued to gather information and responded to calls from residents and persons in surrounding jurisdictions who were learning of the event through the newspaper, media and neighbors. CalWater posted a Boil Water Order advisory and map of the affected areas on its website. Staff contacted CalWater and received a reply with initial information about the contamination, activities for notification to customers, schedule for lab testing of the water and anticipated appeal by CalWater to the State of California to lift the restrictions once the water quality standards tested normal. CalWater continued to update the City on the status of the Boil Water Order and updated citizens on its website. The event affected 853 service connections. CalWater made 576 phone contacts to users, many of which were for multiple service connections.

A similar past event occurred on August 18, 2014 when approximately 100 City residents received notification of a Boil Water Order due to a pump failure that also caused homes to be without water. Noticing by CalWater at that time was done by door hanger, email and phone calls ensuring that all affected properties were contacted using at least one of these methods.

At its July 28, 2015 meeting, the City Council requested a report from CalWater to address the following items:

1. What caused the Boil Water Order event? How was it cleaned up? How did CalWater respond?
2. What were the CalWater procedures for contacting users and what are the plans to contact users if an event occurs in the future?
3. How does CalWater gather and update user contact information? What are CalWater's plans to inform user on why it is so important to update and have contact information on file?

In addition, Council requested information to understand how residents are notified in other events such as police/fire or utility emergencies.

EXISTING POLICY

Los Altos Police Department Policy Manual Section 335; Emergency Notification System (AlertSCC)

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

None

DISCUSSION

To address Council's inquiry regarding the City's notification practices, the City of Los Altos Police Department procedures for emergency notification services are stated in Police Manual Section 335; Emergency Notification System (AlertSCC) and are employed only when there is a matter of urgent importance, prevention of loss of life or immediate and imminent threat to health and safety (Attachment 1). Examples include barricaded criminal suspects, local floods and fires, hazardous materials releases/spills and earthquake responses. The AlertSCC system automatically sends emergency notifications to hard-wired telephones in the 411 and 911 databases. Blackboard Connect, a private corporation, maintains the servers and names from the database. The system is operated by the Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Services in coordination with the 15 participating agencies. The system's data is confidential and is not available to other users.

In addition to AlertSCC, the City utilizes Nixle to notify subscribers at three levels of events: emergency alerts; advisories; and community notices. Citizens can subscribe for notification services on the City of Los Altos website. A helpful FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page is provided on the Police Department page for detailed information about the notification services.

On July 21, 2015, a Nixle advisory was sent to City of Los Altos residents warning about home burglaries by persons dressed as water utility workers. Due to the concern about burglaries, residents contacted the Police Department when CalWater utility service workers began knocking on doors to warn them about the water contamination. To minimize upset to residents, CalWater limited the hours for door-to-door notifications while attempting to remain in compliance with established regulations for water contamination events.

As requested by Council, CalWater will present its report on the Boil Water Order, its notification processes and respond to Council's questions as part of this agenda item.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION

Receive a report on California Water Service Company Boil Water Order and notification to residents

ALTERNATIVES

Not applicable

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Receive a report on the recent California Water Service Company Boil Water Order and notification to residents

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Los Altos Police Department Policy Manual Section 335; Emergency Notification System (AlertSCC)
2. CalWater's Response to July 24, 2015 Water Main Break on O'Keefe Lane

Emergency Notification System (AlertSCC)

335.1 OVERVIEW

The City of Los Altos benefits from the use of emergency notification services through Santa Clara County's Regional Mass Notification System known as "AlertSCC." AlertSCC is powered by Connect-CTY, a mass notification system developed by Blackboard Connect, Inc. (BCI), which provides a broad range of notification methods, including voice, text, and email messages.

AlertSCC addresses two specific and different notification needs. The primary function of AlertSCC is to send urgent, time sensitive notification messages to designated recipients, such as all residents and businesses of a specific geographical area, in the event of an emergency. AlertSCC can also be used as an internal notification system for sending messages to Department employees such as a SWAT callout.

AlertSCC was purchased by the County of Santa Clara and is being made available to all Santa Clara County agencies, unincorporated areas, and special safety districts. Use of the system is contingent upon the City signing and abiding by the required participant agreement and by implementing policies and procedures consistent with the County's use policy.

335.1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish uniformity and standards in using emergency notification services and to establish roles and responsibilities.

335.2 POLICY

The policy of the Los Altos Police Department is to have designated and authorized personnel utilize the Notification System to create and rapidly disseminate time-sensitive messages and information to the public using telephone numbers, email addresses and/or text-capable devices stored in the AlertSCC notification database. Notifications may include items such as emergency and priority communications.

This policy establishes procedures to ensure only approved and verified information is distributed to residents, businesses, and City employee groups and to designate the officials who are authorized to access the system.

335.2.1 DEFINITIONS

1. Emergency Notification (Priority Communication in Connect-CTY)

For the purposes of this policy, an "Emergency Notification" is defined as a notification employed only when there is a matter of urgent importance and used when it has been determined that a certain number of people must be notified to prevent the loss of life or there is an immediate and imminent threat to their health and safety. Examples include barricaded criminal suspects, floods, fires in an immediate area, hazardous materials releases / spills, and earthquake responses.

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2. Inter- and Intra-Departmental Notification

For the purposes of this policy, "Inter- and Intra-Departmental Notification" is defined as a notification of City staff for Department/City organizational needs, i.e., SWAT callouts, EOC activations.

3. Interactive Survey

For purposes of this policy, "Interactive Surveys" through the AlertSCC system allows users to send a message with a question that recipients can respond to using their telephone keypad. As with other message types, the City will have the ability to access detailed results of the survey, including how each recipient responded. This may be used for Inter- and Intra-Departmental notifications to determine delivery of message and availability for response.

4. Authorized User

For purposes of this policy, an "Authorized User" is an individual who has been designated by the Chief of Police to have access to the AlertSCC system and has completed the County's training class on the use of the system. This individual may approve and/or send messages via AlertSCC. The Police Department shall maintain a list of authorized users.

5. Designee

For purposes of this policy, a "designee" is defined as an individual(s) who has been pre-identified by the City Manager or Chief of Police to approve and authorize, as appropriate, notifications in accordance with the this Policy.

335.3 NOTIFICATION DATABASE

It is the City's intent to have every residence and commercial facility within City limits stored in the notification database. For businesses, Connect-CTY only stores one main phone number; for residents Connect-CTY may have more than one number stored in the database. Residents may request to have two additional phone numbers entered into the database for priority calling, as well as an email address. The AlertSCC notification database is updated monthly by Connect-CTY. Residents will be urged to update the information when changing email or phone numbers of addresses.

Communications personnel shall be responsible for maintaining the City's internal database.

335.4 ALERTSCC DATABASE ACCESS

Only authorized users, as defined in this policy, may access AlertSCC or the Connect-CTY database and only for those purposes outlined in this policy. The system or database shall not be accessed or used for any personal or other business need outside the scope of this policy.

335.5 ALERTSCC PROCEDURE

Responsibilities

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The AlertSCC Program is managed by the Police Department Police Services Division. Communications personnel may only send police-related notifications that are requested by the following people:

City Manager
Chief of Police
Police Captain
On-duty Watch Commander
Police Services Manager

When receiving a request for AlertSCC activation, Communications personnel shall instruct the requester to fill out the ALERTSCC- Emergency Notification System Request for Activation form. If the requester is not in the building, Communications personnel shall walk the requester through the form, filling in all relevant information. Once the message information has been gathered, Communications personnel shall create the message in the system. All AlertSCC messages must be approved by an approved "Authorizer" prior to being sent. Approved authorizers include the following:

Chief of Police
Police Captain
Police Services Manager

The message will be reviewed for content and subsequent distribution. Upon approval, the message will be activated by Communications Personnel. The Communications Officer activating the message shall ensure that the designated AlertSCC phone number is used in the Caller ID field of the message. The Communications Officer shall record the same AlertSCC message as the greeting associated with this number. This will allow residents to call back the Caller ID number they see on their phone and have the message repeated back to them without having to call the Communications Center. The voicemail box does not allow a resident to leave a message and will instruct the caller to call 9-1-1 should an emergency exist.

Residents who wish to sign up for AlertSCC shall be referred to the AlertSCC website

335.6 PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

There are three levels of authorized notifications.

1. Emergency Notification

The definition of an "Emergency", as defined by the County Office of Emergency Services for the purposes of sending a notification, is an incident, situation or natural phenomenon that:

- Is immediately threatening to life, health, property or the environment; or
- has caused loss of life, health detriments, property damage or environmental damage; or

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- has a high probability of escalating to cause immediate danger to life, health, property or environment.

This type of notification may only be requested by the City Manager, Police Chief, Police Captain, or On-Duty Watch Commander. AlertSCC Priority alerts may be sent in situations involving immediate, pending or perceived threats to public safety or property. An Emergency Notification alert is recommended to be indicated when "Immediate" notification will enable individuals to take steps that will reduce the likelihood of injury or death or provide critical information to the public to avoid panic or reduce concern.

Recognizing the goal is to ensure the community is informed about incidents as soon as possible, the timing for sending an AlertSCC notification will be dependent on a variety of factors, including the allocation of available Department resources to accomplish the task.

When sending Emergency Notification messages take into consideration the time of day, as these messages are delivered to all phone numbers and email addresses for each resident/business/group identified to receive the alert. The following are examples of situations in which time-sensitive emergency public notification via AlertSCC may be authorized:

- Barricaded Criminal Suspects
- Severe Weather Conditions
- Rising Flood Waters
- Fires requiring immediate activation
- Natural Disasters
- Kidnapping/Abduction
- Hostage Situations or other Major Police Activity
- Hazardous Materials Incidents
- Bomb Threats requiring evacuation or shelter in place

Whenever an Emergency Notification is issued, an update notification indicating the situation leading to the issuance of the Emergency Notification has been resolved. The update will be issued only to the same individuals to whom an Emergency Notification had been previously issued.

2. WEBSITE POSTING OF PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

It shall be the responsibility of the Department issuing an AlertSCC public notification to ensure that a copy of the AlertSCC alert is immediately placed on the City's website under both the City's main page and the Police Department page and should be kept as current as driven by the event prompting the notification. Emergency Notification (Priority Communication) messages should also be published on the City's website home page under News Alerts. The AlertSCC notification information should remain on the City's website until the event is mitigated. Placing of this information on the City's website shall be initiated through the IT Manager.

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3. INTER- AND INTRA-DEPARTMENTAL NOTIFICATIONS

These are notices sent by Department heads, or assigned designees, to employees within their respective department or for multiple departments. This service can be utilized for emergency or routine notifications based on operational needs. Use of this service is only limited by individual department policies.

Website posting is not required for inter and intra-departmental notifications.

Unsuccessful Messages:

There are several types of unsuccessful deliveries. Some citizens will not receive messages because of an answering machine malfunction, recently changed phone numbers, unlisted numbers, busy signal, and when citizens hang up when they hear a recorded message. AlertSCC will attempt to recall numbers up to three times.



California Water Service

September 8, 2015

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Cal Water's Response to July 24 Water Main Break on O'Keefe Lane

ATTACHMENT 2

Water main leak background

- Water main break occurred at 8:30 a.m., possibly due to root damage
- Cal Water crews responded within 30 minutes
- Total repair took 12+ hours
- Water main flushed after repair
- Required water quality sample taken



Water main leak



Water quality test results

- Sunday, July 26 at 10:35 a.m., received results from lab:
 - Positive E.coli
 - Positive total coliform
- Immediately notified state Division of Drinking Water (DDW) to coordinate action plan



Action plan

- Finalized response plan with DDW
- Mobilized resources
- Determined potential affected area
- Began sampling throughout potential area to confirm initial results
- Prepared and implemented notification plan
 - Automated phone calls
 - Notification to municipal partners
 - Door-to-door customer notification
 - Web site, social media



Automated phone notification

- System contacted 576 of 853 service connections within minutes of launch
- Custom application enables us to target specific areas affected without having to notify entire ZIP codes
- Has capability to send emails and text messages; however, due to low percentage of email addresses and opt-ins for text, only used phone notification as supplemental notification
- Will continue to seek updated contact information from customers (bill insert and letter to customers)



Door-to-door notification

- Written notification required by DDW as quickly as possible
- Written notification took much longer than anticipated due to:
 - Size of area
 - Time of day
 - Safety
- Notification suspended at 4:45 a.m. Monday, resumed with second shift employees at 6:45 a.m. until completed



Operational response

Actions taken to minimize risk:

- Conservative approach
- Kept advisory active after E.coli detections eliminated due to presence of total coliform (typically, total coliform does not necessitate a boil water advisory)
- Systematically lifted advisory notice as sample results became available



Advisory area (continued)

August 1

- 7 service connections

August 2

- 2 service connections

August 8

- Advisory lifted for final two service connections



Actions taken throughout advisory

- Kept customers and all stakeholders updated
- Sampled systematically
- Installed new hydrant
- Disinfected main in immediate leak area
- Provided free bottled water, also reimbursing customers
- Plan for main replacement underway for long-term reliability



Areas of improvement

- More resources available for door-to-door notification to allow for quicker initial notification and communication
- Updated contact information critical for all customers
- Response time to individual customer concerns and communicating directly with community leaders



Follow-up notification

- Web site updates daily
- Phone notifications daily to all customers with language that information already on web if they want to see it before receiving written notification, in addition to notifying city management and community leaders
- Employees added to distribute written notices
- Updates to media outlets daily or almost daily
- Updates pushed out via Facebook/Twitter almost daily



Future notification

- Web site updated first
- When automated phone calls and emails launched, will reference web site so customers can get information immediately
- Working to collect updated contact information for customers (bill insert in September bills, letters, social media, CSRs)
- Will bring in additional resources to assist with door-to-door notification as needed



Questions?



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