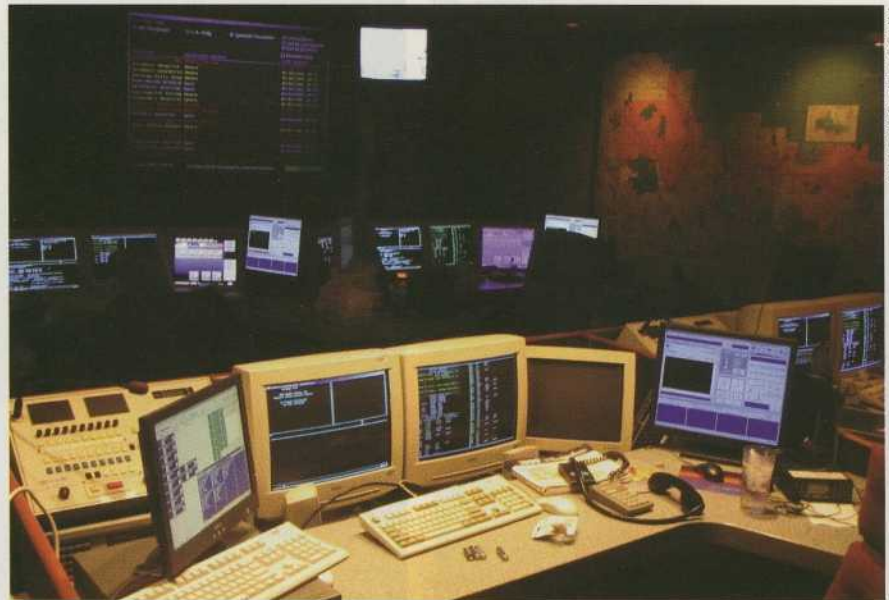


the use of the latest whiz-bag gizmo, but they work in practice. An example of a great low-tech solution was the medical triage area, which used color-coded tarps on the ground to mark each level and priority of treatment, making it easier than inspecting each individual's triage tag for the extent and priority of injury. The LAFD Command Unit did respond to the scene, but was used for the Command Staff to conduct periodic planning sessions away from the immediate scene, as well as to coordinate the media.

In the Verdugo Communications Center, the first two telephone calls reporting the incident were transfers from the California Highway Patrol, but gave non-specific information about a train wreck somewhere between Glendale and Burbank. The third call identified the scene as near a Costco store on Los Feliz Boulevard, in Los Angeles City jurisdiction. Although the Costco was not located in their immediate



The Verdugo Fire Communications Center in Glendale was the primary PSAP handling the Metrolink incident. The wreck occurred at shift change, effectively doubling available dispatch center staff.

response area, the Verdugo CAD system had added businesses along their jurisdic-

tion to their database, and Verdugo dispatchers were able to quickly create a

Notification System Warns Employees of Train Wreck

The tragic derailment of a commuter train in Glendale, Calif., on January 26, 2005 illustrated the importance of quick response from law enforcement and emergency providers in times of crisis. The chaos that ensued in the morning hours after the horrific accident also served to highlight the effectiveness of automated mass communications.

That morning, employees from National Notification Network (3n) received urgent messages while making their daily commute to the company's Glendale offices. The employees were alerted of the crash using the very same mass notification system 3n provides to hundreds of organizations countrywide. The message included instructions for 3n employees to take to keep them out of danger.

Once aware of the situation, 3n's director of information services, Gaylene Kelly, initiated a notification via the 3n System and sent the following message:

"There has been a train derailment in Glendale involving Metrolink commuter trains. Due to the severity of the accident and inclement weather, your commute may be impacted; avoid driving on highway I-5 if possible. Please let us know if you have information about any 3n employees that may have been on Metrolink this morning. Thank you."

Due to the urgency of the message, she chose to send it in text via email, instant messenger, pager, and PDA, and in voice via cell and satellite phone. The system automatically converted her typed message to voice. Within minutes, 28 employees had confirmed receipt of the message, including those believed to be aboard the two involved trains. The remainder of the message recipients confirmed shortly thereafter.

Ultimately, no 3n employees were on the affected trains and

all arrived safely at their destination. Each was able to confirm receipt of the message using their mobile phone, and 3n thus accounted for their safety.

The 3n Mass Notification System is used by corporate, education and government organizations to instantly disseminate messages to any number recipients via multiple contact paths, including phone, email, IM, pager, fax and wireless devices such as laptops, PDA's and BlackBerries. Messages can be set up for mass distribution through the 3n Web site, via a phone call, or through a customer service representative. A message can go to any grouping or number of contacts; in this case, messages were sent to all employees.

Messages are sent repeatedly to all devices until the recipient provides message confirmation. Using the system's extensive reporting capabilities, administrators are able to track confirmations and provide follow-up action, particularly important in critical situations such as the train derailment.

Automated communications serve as a critical component in a company's disaster recovery plan. While human loss is the gravest of possible consequences, firms may also suffer a loss of production or distribution facilities, inventory, data, customer base, market value, or their valuable reputation. When avoiding crisis may not be entirely possible, a communications plan is essential to minimizing the time and resources lost when business interruption does occur.

Such systems fill critical gaps in organizations' communication and disaster plans. Using an automated tool in emergency situations frees administrators from the laborious task of manually contacting individuals.

Managers should conduct an analysis of emergency commu-

common place CAD event to correctly send the proper emergency response.

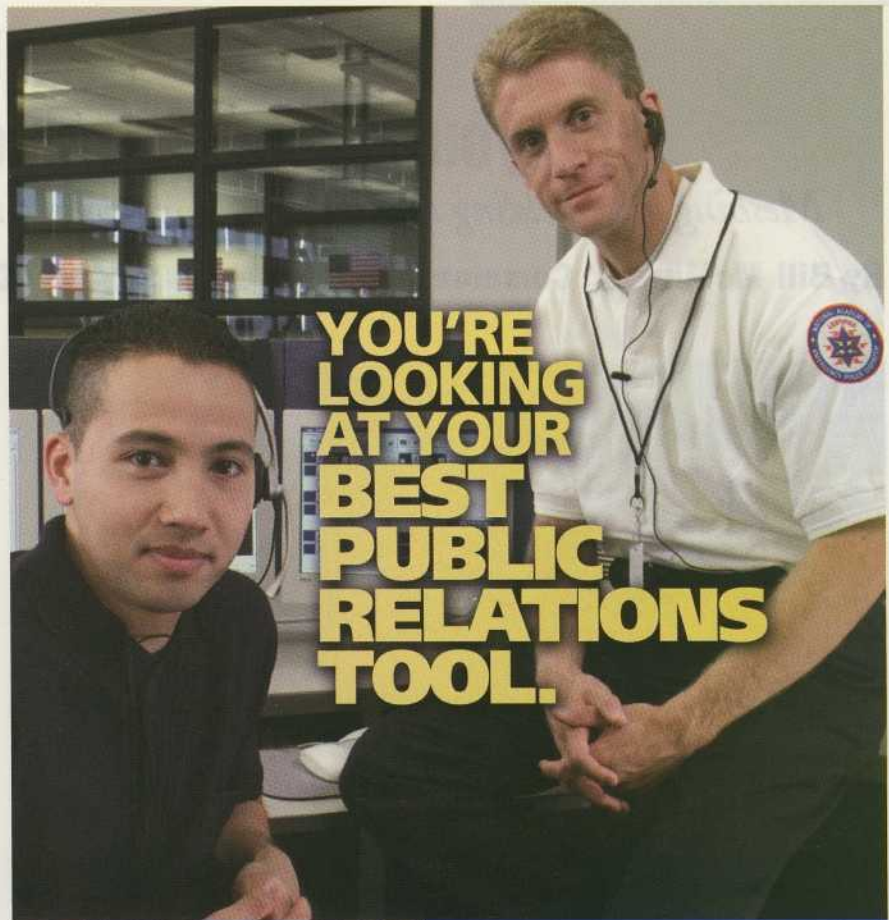
The Los Angeles Fire Department's Communications Center also referred excess calls to the city's 3-1-1 Center, to answer non-emergency questions and process referrals for service.

Volunteers Are A Valuable Resource. The derailment occurred next door to a local Costco, whose employees mobilized almost immediately to the scene to render aid. While some employees performed CPR on victims still on the railroad tracks, others scrambled through the wreckage with hand-held fire extinguishers assisting victims, as others used Costco furniture carts to transport victims to medical aid. The large empty Costco parking lot made a great staging and triage area for responders, and Costco workers set up an impromptu Rehab area in their outdoor restaurant seating area for responders

Continued on page 62

nications with an examination of their firm's unique critical tasks - evaluating their communication needs by asking who, what, and when. Who will need to communicate in an emergency, what will be communicated, and when will the system be utilized? An emergency communications system that is suitable for everyday use has a natural advantage over another that is emergency-only. Daily use of a communications platform breeds employee familiarity and confidence in the system.

Emergency managers should evaluate past events when their organization suffered from exposure or business interruption, asking how an emergency communication system could have been utilized to minimize risks to the firm and its employees. A natural extension of this exercise is to then brainstorm a multitude of additional risk scenarios and apply "who, what and when" to those, as well. The result should be a clear, understandable picture of how an emergency communications system would truly benefit an organization during a crisis. **9-1-1**



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