



City of Malibu News

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City of Malibu to Conduct Full-Scale Test of Disaster Notification System

(Malibu CA) – The City will conduct a full-scale test of Everbridge, Malibu’s Disaster Mass Notification System, on Wednesday, June 26 as part of the City’s ongoing efforts to improve disaster preparedness and to test an improvement of the system that dramatically increases the City’s ability reach residents via cell phones.

“We are already applying lessons learned from the devastating Woolsey Fire, as well as the historic wildfires that have ravaged California in recent years, to keep improving our emergency communications for future disasters,” Mayor Jefferson “Zuma Jay” Wagner said. “This test will help us refine the system and raise awareness among the community of this important tool so that we are all better prepared.”

Everbridge recently reached an agreement with cellphone companies to provide government agencies, including Malibu, the cellphone numbers of account holders with addresses in the City so that they can be entered into the system database.

Until now, the only way the City had access to people’s cell phone numbers was if they registered themselves on the Everbridge system and added their cell number. Previously, only landline numbers were provided to the City by the phone companies. Now, the City will be able to increase the number of cellphones in the Everbridge database from about 3,600 to about 12,000. All information will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with third parties.

Following the test of the system on June 26, the City will analyze the effectiveness of the system and will conduct additional outreach to register more residents.

While there are still major challenges that were revealed by the Woolsey Fire, such as cellphone infrastructure being destroyed and widespread power outages, the expansion of cellphone numbers in the Disaster Notification System is a major improvement in the City’s ability to get timely, relevant, actionable information out to the public during emergencies.

The City is exploring ways to overcome the issues of power outages and the vulnerability of cellphone infrastructure, which are problems that every government and public safety agency in the state are grappling with. The City is already installing repeaters for handheld radios that Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) team members and Sheriff’s Volunteers on Patrol (VOPs), staff and other volunteers can use to distribute information out into the community.

The City is also considering loudspeaker siren towers, which can be solar or battery powered and can be programmed remotely to broadcast audio messages when other methods are down. A system of information distribution points is also being planned. Pop-up booths with bulletin boards displaying printed material would be placed at logical gathering places such as shopping centers and gas stations, across the length of the City, and near the City’s emergency supplies storage containers. Printed public information would be brought out to the boards one or more times a day, and the City would

conduct public outreach so that community members would know to go there to find public information when electronic communications have been knocked out.

Background

The City's disaster mass notification system, Everbridge, is only used in case of major disasters or evacuations to send urgent, critical information by landline phone call, cell phone call, text message and email. It is a separate system from the City's website Alert Center, which is regularly used to send out traffic, weather, utility and (minor) emergency alerts by text message and email to subscribers.

The Everbridge system enables the City to send an alert by voice message, text and email to all registered landlines, cellphones and email addresses. The 26,150 Verizon landlines in Malibu are automatically registered. Users can go to the City's Everbridge website, create a profile, and enter multiple cell phone numbers, landlines and email addresses so that every family member, or staff member of a business, will receive an alert wherever they are.

According to some estimates, fewer than half of all homes currently have a landline. People are increasingly "cutting the cord" and using only cell phones, highlighting the importance of expanding the number of people whose cell phones are in the system.

When activated, the Everbridge system will send a recorded voice and/or text message, and cycle through every device that is registered, until a person clicks a "message received" confirmation. If no confirmation is received, the system will start over and cycle back through all of the devices/contacts until a confirmation is given.

Users can download a free, optional Everbridge mobile app for use on Android or Apple devices. The system will work without the app. To find the app, search for "Everbridge" in your app store.

To sign up for the City's disaster and evacuation alerts through Everbridge, visit www.MalibuCity.org/DisasterNotifications. For more information or assistance with signing up for Everbridge, call Public Safety Manager Susan Dueñas at 310-456-2489 ext. 313 or email SDuenas@MalibuCity.org.

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