Two Communication Tools for Emergency Preparedness

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When planning a large event or responding to a disaster event, communication becomes critical for municipalities. Communication helps coordinate response efforts, mobilize resources, and promote appropriate behavior.

Municipalities now have two additional communication tools they can use. Registering for these tools and using them prior to major events promotes emergency preparedness and lets you focus on disseminating information when a major event does occur.

Waze

Waze is a free crowdsourcing app that helps its users find the shortest route possible while driving. Based on user input, it provides real-time directions and navigates around roadway congestion and closed roads. It actively reroutes users while they are traveling to move them around obstacles.

Through the Waze for Cities program, governmental entities, such as municipalities, can upload data to Waze to alert travelers to road construction, crashes, and road closures. Municipalities also can upload shelter and commodity distribution locations and evacuation routes. Data can be input on the fly for a one-time road closure, such as for an accident or flooded road. It also can be sent to Waze in advance for longer-term closures, such as for large event planning. Municipalities can also "push" alerts to drivers. Information provided by the municipality overrides information provided by roadway users.

If your community is larger, you can ask Waze to link to your traffic control system (e.g. traffic lights, cameras, sensors, etc.). Waze will add this information to its traffic data and provide you with information about travel patterns in your community.

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Waze can be added to the municipality's other communication venues, such as VT-Alert, Front Porch Forum, website or social media pages, and the media.

Priority Telecommunication Services

Priority Telecommunication Services (PTS) enable essential personnel, like emergency preparedness personnel and first responders, to communicate when telecommunications networks are degraded or congested. The federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) offers three voluntary services that municipalities can use so their communications are prioritized during emergencies.

The three Priority Telecommunications Services are:

- **Government Emergency Telecommunications Services (GETS)** is for landline and satellite phones. GETS provides priority access and processing for landline phones based on a subscriber's unique pin. The call initiator can use a cell phone or landline to make a GETS call.
- **Wireless Priority Service (WPS)** is for cell phones. WPS provides priority service within the US and its territories when the wireless network is congested. WPS is an add-on service to a regular cell phone subscription. A PTS Dialer app enables storage of your GETS PIN. The app pulls your PIN from your phone contact list to automatically add in the required GETS or WPS prefix.
- **Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP)** is for repair and installation of critical voice and data circuits. TSP is a Federal Communications Commission program mandating that service providers prioritize requests for repair or installation of voice and data circuit made by organizations with national security and emergency preparedness missions. This service requires advance authorization. Organizations must request priority treatment prior to an event.

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GETS and WPS are free for priority users. While the federal government does not charge for TSP, service providers charge a one-time setup fee and, for service restoration, a monthly recurring service charge per circuit. These programs are specifically for phone calls. They do not offer priority services for any other application, data sharing, or texting with your cell phone.

Municipalities can sign up a group under the municipality's name by using a bulk spreadsheet upload. Contact the Priority Telecommunications Service Center at 1-866-627-2255 or support@gwids.cisa.gov. Learn more about Priority Telecommunication Services at https://www.cisa.gov/topics/emergency-communications/priority-services.

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