

Cell Phones & Mass Notification on Campus (Learn More, Video)

By **Tammy Waitt** - April 18, 2017



Truly effective mass emergency notification should effectively reach your users through multiple channels. Alertus Desktop Notification grabs the attention of your computer users immediately with a full screen (or optional partial screen) pop-up alert.

By **Greg Smith**, *Campus Life Security*

Today, cell phones and mobile devices are ubiquitous on college campuses. Whether students are on the way to class or heading to the student center, they are seen talking, texting, or downloading the latest app on their phones.

With on-campus cell phone usage so widespread, these devices can also provide university emergency and security officials an effective means to notify thousands of students at once about a campus threat and provide potentially life-saving instructions.

North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C., incorporates cell phones into the school's emergency mass notification system.

Many of the school's notification alerts—SMS, email, and social media—rely heavily on users to either have cell reception or to be actively looking at a specific app to see the message.

- **Location:** Raleigh, NC
- **Campus Type:** Suburban
- **Enrollment:** 34,000
- **Faculty/Staff:** 8,000
- **Campus Size:** 2,009 acres
- **Number of buildings:** 400



North Carolina State University

The Challenge of Poor Cell Reception

But what if students and teachers are in a location, such as a large lecture hall, that has poor cell phone reception and no other forms of emergency communication?

Todd Becker, North Carolina State's Emergency Manager faced this challenge.

"Cell phone reception is minimal in the lower floors of many of the newer campus buildings," said Becker.

“We were concerned with delivering initial notifications and instructions to people to remain and take shelter in these buildings.”

Even though the school deployed an outdoor siren system and had digital signage capabilities in some common student areas, this concern was valid.

“We recognized this limitation in notifying people inside many of these buildings,” added Becker.



North Carolina State University

Finding a Visual Solution

Becker felt the current notification system needed a visual component that could flash alerts onto computer desktops, laptops, and some of the digital signage.

A visual alert would help ensure faculty and students in areas with poor cell coverage would receive the notification. The component also needed to integrate seamlessly into the current notification system.

Through the **Alertus Desktop Donation Initiative**, Becker deployed the Alertus Desktop Notification on more than 7,000 school-managed computers throughout the main campus, Centennial Campus (home to more than 70 public and private partners), and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

When activated, the Alertus Desktop Notification immediately grabs the attention of users with a full-screen pop-up alert and instructions.

(Alertus Mass Notification System Overview, featuring Alertus Desktop™ Notification. Courtesy of Alertus and YouTube)

“We saw Alertus as a means to reach people in classrooms, offices and computer labs that typically have poor reception or may be identified as shelter areas,” Becker added.

“The integration with our existing systems along with the grant made it an obvious choice for our campus.”

The Alertus Desktop Donation Initiative assists educational institutions that recognize the need to expand their emergency communications systems but have limited budgets.



Alertus is Now Standard Protocol

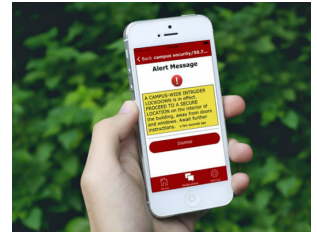
By implementing the **Alertus Desktop Notification**, Becker was able to address a major security concern by not having the notification system so dependent on cell phones.

For NC State University Police, it is now standard protocol for Alertus to be part of all notifications for imminent threats which have included tornado warnings and armed assaults.

They also deploy **Alertus** for emergency events that occur after business hours as students or faculty may be leaving offices, libraries or other facilities.

While Becker is satisfied with the school's current notification system, he continues to evaluate other notifications systems for efficiencies and best practices.

Original post <https://campuslifesecurity.com/Articles/2017/04/10/Cell-Phones-and-Mass-Notification-on-Campus.aspx?Page=1>



An exciting capability is a panic button feature for the Alertus Mobile App

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