

Shawnee Mission Medical Center

Alertus Helps Shawnee Mission Medical Center Fill the Communication Gap

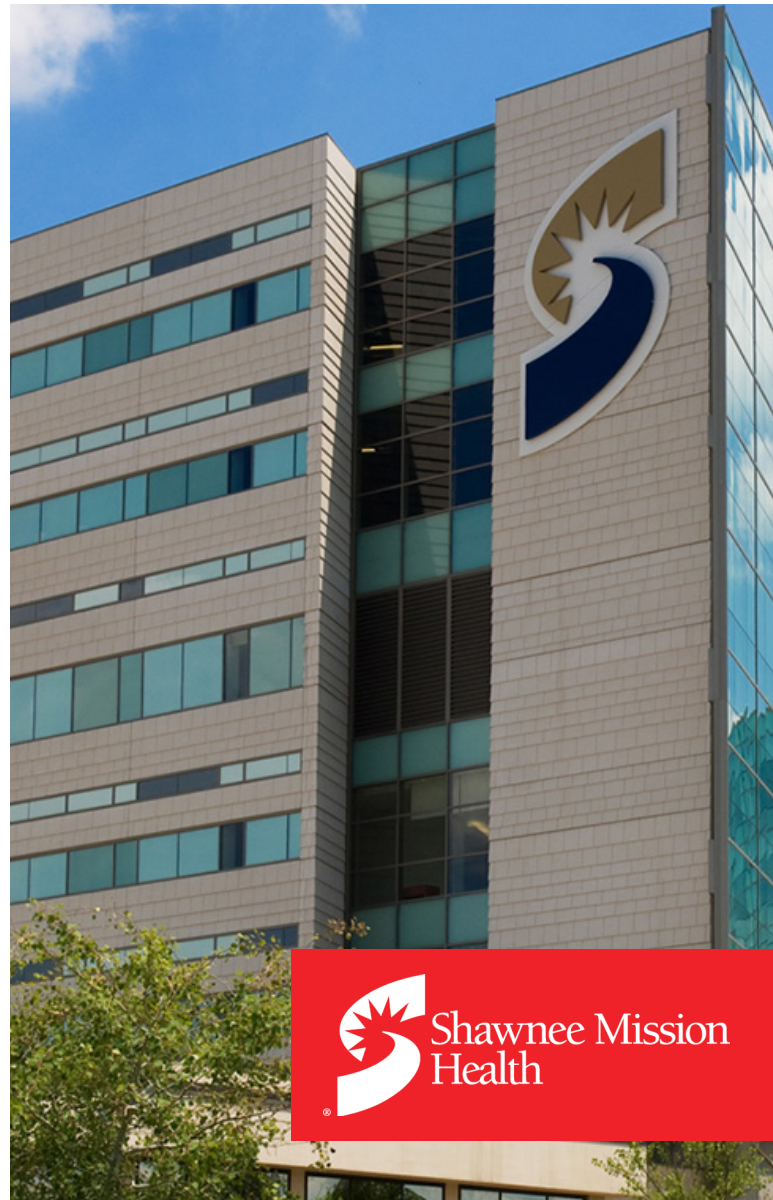
Challenge

When seconds count in an emergency; such as an active shooter or severe weather, gaps in communication can cost lives. Many schools, businesses, and healthcare facilities face the challenge of ensuring comprehensive coverage with their existing emergency mass communication systems. Such was the case at Shawnee Mission Medical Center, part of the Adventist Health System (AHS), located in Merriam, Kansas.

“There were gaps in our communication for routine and emergency alerts, many areas in the facility did not receive the primary alert from the Overhead Paging when it was announced (or it was inaudible),” stated Daniel Anderson, Shawnee Mission Health’s Emergency Management Program Manager. “When we looked to identify areas which had communication deficient areas; we also identified modes of communication to fill the gaps from the Overhead Paging system for our Mass Communication System Plan.”

Deploying the Alertus Desktop Notification

Identifying this gap in communication led the facility to deploy the Alertus Desktop™ Notification solution, which has become a lead for emergency communication. For a healthcare facility where the majority of staff members work near a computer, it is an effective communication tool. The facility also identified a regular use for the system were they routinely push out medical alerts and other associated internal emergent notifications. Anderson added, “When you have a system solely for emergency communication, you often only use the system twice a year when you test it. My belief in emergency communication is when you can find a routine use for the system you will not forget how to use the system and will produce a more efficient communication from a tested system.”



Shawnee Mission
Health

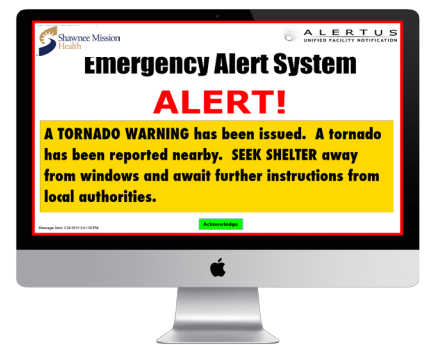
Prior to implementing Alertus[®], Shawnee Mission did employ a desktop notification system but it was a challenge to update and manage. A major issue arose when the computers were switched out or their software was updated. The desktop system did not provide continuity for which PCs did or did not have the panic software. The primary identification was the placement of stickers on the keyboards. However, this was troublesome because when the PCs were swapped out, the keyboards remained the same but no longer had the panic software. Employees thought they could still press the keyboard buttons to activate the panic function which was not always the case. “Employees were pushing buttons for no reason,” said Anderson. “We were creating a false sense of security that needed to be eliminated.”

The arrival of Alertus Desktop[™] Notification solved many of these issues from the prior system. The Alertus toolbar shows the desktop notification is online, and ready to receive notifications. This is also observed from the Alertus Unified Facility Notification Menus.

Targeting the “Lull” Areas

While the desktop notification helped provide comprehensive coverage throughout the staffed areas-in-the-hospital, there were still “lull” notification-areas such as lobbies, hallways, and entry/exit areas. These areas lacked a constant staffed associate who could convey actions or the message from the communication platform such as the desktop notification and this needed to be addressed.

“We had to look at different ways to touch these lull locations” explained Anderson. “People could not get an alert if a staff member was not present to advise them of the issue or threat.” To that end, the hospital deployed Alertus Alert Beacons[®] to better notify these building areas of an emergency. To further provide coverage, an emergency notification can be pushed through the hallway TV monitors, which typically carry a marketing message via the Alertus Desktop[™] Notification as well.



Alertus Desktop Notification can deliver a facility-wide emergency notification in a matter of seconds.

Alertus System Tested in Real Time

The Alertus system has been tested in real events time and time again, including in November 2015 during a “Shots-Fired event.” Shots were fired nearby causing the hospital to go into lockdown. The Alertus system was activated and hundreds of hospital occupants were alerted to the situation. After the event, Anderson was able to run a report through Alertus to see how many people they reached and used the incident as an opportunity to refine their emergency response protocols. “With our existing and prior communication mediums we could never evaluate how many people we have touched,” he explained. “It was more of a guess.”

During a tornado event in 2015, the Alertus system’s capability to send targeted, customized messages proved invaluable. The hospital received two different weather warnings: An “Imminent Warning” for the Shawnee Mission Medical Center location and a “Null Warning” for the Shawnee Mission Health Prairie Star location in nearby Lenexa, Kansas. The alert notifications required different actions, and through the Alertus system, they were able to notify personnel at the Lenexa location that patients did not need to be moved while simultaneously notifying the Shawnee Mission Medical Center campus that patients did need to be moved.

Fulfilling Critical Gaps

Shawnee Mission Medical Center and Anderson were able to fulfill critical gaps in Shawnee Mission Medical Center and Shawnee Mission Health’s communications by implementing the Alertus Desktop Alert notification and Alert Beacons. As he continues to work toward fully integrating the hospital’s mass communication efforts, Anderson plans to leverage the Alertus system’s unparalleled integration capabilities to tailor his mass notification strategy to fit the hospital’s unique needs.