



Legislation Text

File #: 19-1651, **Version:** 2

Chief Administrative Office, EMS and Preparedness Division, recommending the Board:

- 1) Approve funding for the Alert Media internal emergency communication tool to assist in distributing timely emergency notification and status information to County departments and employees, in the amount of \$15,000 for the first year;
- 2) Authorize the purchasing agent to sign a three-year agreement for said communication tool; and
- 3) Approve the related budget transfer reducing the General Fund Appropriation for Contingency by \$15,000 and increasing appropriations in the EMS Preparedness Division budget by \$15,000. (4/5 vote required to approve the budget transfer.)

FUNDING: General Fund.

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

Since 2017, the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R) program has led El Dorado County's Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning process. During this planning process, EP&R staff identified that some departments have alert and notification systems that are used on a small scale. However, the County lacks a single, effective mass notification system to provide one-way, coordinated internal communication to all County employees. Often times, important and time-sensitive notifications are sent out via email, posted on EDCnet and/or available via the building closure line and don't always reach the intended recipients in a timely manner.

Benefits of Mass Notification Systems

There are several benefits to using mass notification systems within an organization. Mass notification systems:

- Can improve the safety and security of an organization by providing alerts and real-time instructions during an incident.
- Have the ability to provide employees with vital information and early warnings to allow them to better prepare for impending events, such as snow days and Public Safety Power Shutoff events.
- Have the ability to notify a large number of people within minutes, without having to deal with individual emails, texts or phone trees.
- Reduce the spread of misinformation through controlled messaging.
- Play a significant role in COOP by protecting organizations from coming to a standstill.

Research

In August 2019, EP&R conducted a survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-6ZGPHHY7/>) and it indicated communication was a concern. To address this, EP&R staff researched mass notification systems for internal business use. EP&R staff determined that an internal County mass notification system would need to meet the following criteria: ease of use for administrators; ability to be used by all County departments independently; secure and streamlined data upload and sync processes; and cost effective. Additionally, EP&R staff reached out to County departments to determine if there are mass notification systems currently being used in the County. Below is a summary of what was discovered:

- **Sheriff's Office** uses Code Red for community alerts.
- **Probation Department** uses GroupCast for internal notifications to Probation staff.
- **Health and Human Services Agency** uses California Health Alert Network (CAHAN), a state-contracted notification system to send notices to Public Health/Executive Staff and health care partners.
- **District Attorney** recently reviewed AlertMedia.

Several mass notification systems were reviewed by EP&R staff, including: GroupCast, Everbridge and AlertMedia.

Recent Events

During October 2019, El Dorado County has experienced PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs that impacted County government facilities. A challenge identified in the after action of these events was the ability to quickly, efficiently and effectively communicate with County staff. A mass notification system with multiple modalities has proven effective to solving similar communication challenges in other jurisdictions and sectors.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board could decline to approve the budget transfer; EMS Preparedness would continue to communicate via email and posting to the County web-site. However, this is not recommended.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

None.

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Information Technology; Department Heads through Information Technology Steering Committee

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

It is recommended that the Board approve this item.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This recommendation will reduce the Appropriation for Contingency by \$15,000; however, sufficient funding is available within the Appropriation for Contingency to remain above the 3% of Adjusted General Fund appropriations established by Board budget policy. The Probation Department is exploring discontinuing its use of GroupCast and using Alert Media instead. This would result in approximately \$2,000 in savings annually in that department.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

If approved, signature of Board Chair on Budget Transfer and forward to Auditor-Controller for further processing.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

Good Governance and Public Safety. Preparedness and Continuity of County operations are priorities for maintaining on-going county business operations.

CONTACT

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