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Recent Excerpts from Current News Publications on alerting failures

For full articles check out the links included at the bottom of the excerpt

East Coast earthquake brings cell networks down

August 23 2011 | Sylvie Barak



Update: includes quote from CTIA

As an unusual 5.9 magnitude earthquake hit the U.S East Coast today, cell service providers grappled to deal with the demand on their networks.

Both Verizon and AT&T admitted outages caused by the volume of calls being made, while T-Mobile also said it was experiencing congestion.

"T-Mobile's network is experiencing higher call volumes in all areas affected by the earthquake. We advise customers to use SMS or E-Mail," said T-Mobile on Twitter.

"Seeing no reports of damage to our wireless network. There was some network congestion in the East after tremors. Continuing to monitor," said Verizon Wireless.

"Customers in East may experience intermittent delay making/receiving calls after recent earthquake. This is a temporary mass calling event," said Sprint adding, "To contact loved ones following earthquake, please use text msgs rather than call. Call delays due to temporary mass calling event."



CTIA, the association which represents all of America's carriers, also released a statement after the earthquake saying "The industry's infrastructure appears to be intact, but because many wireless consumers are using the networks, we are experiencing higher than normal traffic. In these high volume instances, there can be delays. We encourage people to send text messages and emails to contact their loved ones until volume returns to normal."

T-Mobile, Verizon and AT&T all saw their networks crumble under pressure as far away as NYC, where service was reportedly down in Manhattan, Mid-Town and other areas. All three carriers also had blackouts in Washington DC, the nation's capital.

Meanwhile, the blackouts don't seem to have dampened the volume of tweets coming out of affected areas, with irate customers taking to Twitter to bash their carriers for seemingly being unable to cope with even a minor natural disaster.

"Maybe AT&T should have to be able to keep THEIR network up before buying somebody else too," wrote one disgruntled customer.

"Small earthquake in DC. AT&T, sprint, Verizon networks overloaded. Preview of communications in a real emergency," wrote another.

Some managed to retain their humor, however. "My AT&T phone seems to be working better than usual, then again..." joked a third Twitterer.

While the ground may have stopped moving for now, it's clear carriers are going to have to reassess their emergency coverage capabilities going forward if they don't want to shatter the trust of their customers going forward.

<http://www.rcrwireless.com/article/20110823/CARRIERS/110829982/-1/east-coast-earthquake-brings-cell-networks-down?elq=a9e6c28c96674b629edb2672be28bfd6&elqCampaignId=233>

Cellular System Performance during Indiana State Fair.

I'm sure most readers are aware of the tragedy that killed several people in Indiana last weekend. In addition to the basic tragedy, several news articles have reported that cellular systems were jammed up immediately following the collapse of the stage preventing people from communicating their status to friends and loved ones. We have been researching whether this "jamming" affected only cellular voice traffic or if the data channels supported by cellular networks were also jammed. To date, we have received only verbal comments that only "minor delays" were experienced by text messaging services while a number of voice calls failed completely! We are desirous, however, of receiving unambiguous data that truly documents this incident and we will continue to pursue such next week.

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Update to MU Alert issue: Verizon carriers

The Snapper: Millersville University; Lynn Rhoades
April 23, 2011

At the end of February, readers were informed of a situation regarding the MU Alert text messaging system.

Some Verizon subscribers were not receiving the MU text Alerts. With the end of the school year approaching, the issue with Cooper Notification System still has not been resolved. The school has been in contact with Cooper numerous times. Cooper is working to fix the problem, but the exact nature of the problem has not been found.

The alerts, which are sent from the University, reach Cooper for distribution without problem. The message is then distributed to service providers. The message alert is reaching Verizon from Cooper, but sometimes after Verizon receives the message things go astray.

<http://thesnapper.com/2011/04/23/update-to-mu-alert-issue-verizon-carriers/>

Many Didn't Get Recall on Shooter Alert

The News Gazette; Paul Wood
March 25, 2011

Problems inherent in text messaging caused issue with all-clear notice.

Robin Kaler, the spokeswoman for the Urbana campus, said two CITES employees were attempting to create templates for potential future problems when one sent the accidental message about 10:40 a.m. It said "Active shooter at BUILDING NAME/INTERSECTION. Escape area if safe to do so or shield/secure your location."

In a later explanatory email, UI Police Chief Barbara O'Connor said the erroneous message was sent to 87,000 email addresses and cellphones.



What Kaler said didn't work well was a text message system that originates at the UI but goes through several telephone providers, who send out texts in large batches at a time.

"If they didn't put the message in the first batch, it could be an hour before the batch with the text could go out," she said.

"We were really trying hard not to depend solely on one method of reaching our community," she said.

Also, phone lines were busy because of the extreme number of calls coming in.

The UI's phone system providing the service, mystateusa, cost \$63,000 to buy and about \$2,500 a year in maintenance, Kaler said.

<http://www.news-gazette.com/news/courts-police-and-fire/2011-03-25/many-didnt-get-recall-shooter-alert.html>

FIU Alert System Criticized After Berry's Death

CBS News; Tim Kephart
May 17, 2010

Florida International University released an internal review of the school's emergency alert system response to the stabbing death of former FIU football player Kendall Berry. According to the report, it took FIU almost an hour and a half to notify students of the stabbing death.

In addition, over 4,600 of the 22,000 students, faculty, and staff that registered for the emergency text messages never received the alert.

The conclusion to the report said that each division did their jobs and responded quickly and effectively. However, it did acknowledge that the emergency response alert system can be improved and "it will."

<http://cbs4.com/iteam/fiu.emergency.response.2.1698467.html>



The full investigation report states that “approximately 4,600 messages were not delivered. Others were delivered with transmission delays.”

Read the full report here:

<http://news.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-Cover-Letter.pdf>

Letter to the Editor: **Campus Shootings: The Crisis Never Ends**

Quincy Martin III, Dean, Student Services, Triton College

On Friday, February 12, 2010, Amy Bishop opened fire during a faculty meeting at the University of Alabama’s Huntsville (UAH) campus. Bishop killed three biology professors and injured three other campus employees. In my findings, many campus shootings have been the cause of student-shooters; however, this particular incident was different. Amy Bishop was a faculty member who was denied tenure, and she was the shooter.

Exactly one week later, another incident on a college campus occurred during the early morning hours on Friday, February 19, 2010, on the campus of Northern Illinois University (NIU). It is with great misfortune that yet again, another shooting occurred. NIU public officials stated that the event appeared to be an isolated incident between two students. One of the students was injured while the other was taken into custody.

http://www.studentaffairs.com/ejournal/Winter_2010/CampusShootings.html



UAH President Addresses Concerns About Delayed Notice in Shooting

By Niki Doyle

February 15, 2010, 10:40AM

HUNTSVILLE, AL -- UAH President David Williams said in an e-mail today he would look into concerns about delayed text message and e-mail alerts that a shooting had occurred on campus.

Some students said e-mails and text messages alerting students of the incident weren't sent until nearly an hour after a UAH biology professor allegedly shot and killed three colleagues Friday afternoon.

http://blog.al.com/breaking/2010/02/uah_president_addresses_concer.html

Suspect Kills Self in Ohio State Shooting, Police Say

March 9, 2010 2:10 p.m. EST

E-mail alerts were sent to students warning them about the shooting, the university said.

The student newspaper, The Lantern, published an article Sunday saying that students were questioning the effectiveness of such e-mail alerts after three serious crimes last week.

Students are allowed to choose if they want to receive the e-mail alerts. On the campus of 50,000-plus students, a little more than 2,600 people receive the e-mails, police told the student paper.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/03/09/ohio.state.shooting/index.html>

Study: Campuses unprepared for catastrophe.

Five out of 28 universities included in a report had plans in place for a mass-casualty emergency

By Dennis Carter, Assistant Editor

Aug 13th, 2009

One researcher who specializes in mass-communications systems warned that the use of text messaging to alert students of danger could bog down cellular networks and block phone calls from students or faculty members trying to contact local authorities, but industry experts and many higher-education officials insist there are ways to reliably send thousands of warning messages without interference.

Late last year, Virginia Tech's VT Alert System—designed to send text and voice messages to cell phones and handheld computers—did not work when the sound of what seemed to many to be gunfire was heard near a campus dormitory. (The loud sounds were caused by a nail gun being fired into a garbage bin.)

When university officials sent out text alerts to students and faculty at 1:40 p.m., only a portion of the messages were received.

The campus community did not receive second and third emergency alerts sent by text and voice message later in the afternoon, Virginia Tech officials said. The campus's service provider, California-based 3n, said in a statement that the alert system was restored at 4:25 p.m. and the company was working "to understand the root cause and to correct it."

Patrick Traynor, an assistant professor in the School of Computer Sciences at Georgia Tech and author of a study examining the limitations of text-messaging services, said text-alert systems that use current cellular networks to transmit thousands of messages simultaneously will often overwhelm the network and cause a partial or complete failure.



“The messages go out one at a time, and there’s nothing that the companies can do to improve that,” Traynor said. “These campus text systems can actually cause more problems than they solve.”

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2009/08/13/study-campus-unprepared-for-catastrophe/>

Do Emergency Text Messaging Systems Put Students in More Danger?

John Bambenek and Agnieszka Klus
EDUCAUSE Quarterly, vol. 31, no. 3 (July–September 2008)

The rush to use text messaging as an emergency notification system fails to consider the weaknesses and potential hazards of this solution.

Crisis communication services must demonstrate several characteristics to meet the requirements for emergency operation:

- Extremely high reliability
- Excellent access control
- High-speed delivery

Does text messaging meet these requirements? No.

Among the features SMS generally does *not* include are error checking, guaranteed delivery, and speed of delivery. In normal situations, this does not matter.

While e-mail and Internet services have defenses such as virus scanners to provide security against attacks, the SMS messaging protocol does not.

An additional vulnerability with SMS messaging was recently discovered. Researchers from Pennsylvania State University demonstrated the



possibility of overwhelming a cellular network by sending a flood of SMS messages to users in the same geographical area. A successful attack would effectively shut down not only the ability to send SMS messages but also the ability to make normal cell phone calls (denial of voice service, or DoVS).

Clearly, SMS messaging lacks reliability, access control, and speed of delivery (when the number of messages is high). SMS messaging simply does not meet the requirements of crisis communications systems because it was never designed for high-stakes communication.

To initiate an emergency message, a dispatcher or other authorized person enters a message within the 160-character limit and sends it off. The time it takes for messages to be received depends largely on the number of users in the list. Anecdotally, technologists who have tested the system for colleges and universities report a 15–60 minute range for receipt of messages. This delay is on top of the time it takes for a 911 call to be initiated, for a dispatcher to gather information, and for the appropriate decision maker to authorize sending the message.

Leading Victims to the Threat

While the possibility of using false text messages is not inconsequential, there is a more significant risk: A hostile entity could use a forged emergency text message to lead victims to the threat instead of away from it. This scenario is not hard to imagine—it has happened before.

In 1998, the Real IRA (an Irish Republican Army splinter group) phoned in a bomb threat indicating a courthouse in Omagh, Northern Ireland, was the target. There is some debate whether the confusion was intended or accidental. Unfortunately, the lack of prosecution of those responsible means we may never know.

The car bomb was not at the courthouse, however, but in the city center. As part of the standard bomb threat response procedures in Northern



Ireland, the area around the courthouse was secured and bystanders were moved to the city center—a safe distance. The city center and the associated businesses stayed open while police investigated the threat. The bomb in the city center exploded, killing dozens of people. The destruction and loss of life was more severe because of the confusion over the actual target.

With the deployment of emergency text messaging systems using an insecure protocol, it becomes possible for a malicious individual to use such technology to achieve the same result. Any notification system could be misused this way, but emergency text messaging systems are particularly vulnerable and easier to exploit.

© 2008 John Bambenek and Agnieszka Klus.

COMMENT **The more I think about this...**

Submitted by [John C.A. Bambenek](#) (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) on August 11, 2008 - 10:25am.

One comment you made, "While text alerting is far from perfect, and was admittedly not designed for emergency notification", I think sums it up. We more or less agree there are technical problems... we agree that they aren't permanent... but my position is that if we are going to trust a technology to be used in life or death situations, the technology needs to be solid, not have the potential to be solid some day. If you want to use text messages to announce say, school closings (if you can deal with the scale problem) fine. But we're talking about giving instructions out when seconds matter and while people are dying. It's simply not there yet and putting on the rose colored glasses in such cases is simply bad policy.

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<http://www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/EDUCAUSEQuarterlyMagazineVolum/DoEmergencyTextMessagingSystem/163097>



Report on Virginia Tech Shooting Finds Notification Delays

By Ian Urbina
New York Times
December 4, 2009

...University officials could have saved lives by notifying students and faculty members earlier about the killings on campus. The report, for instance, indicates that students who were initially locked down at West Ambler Johnston residence hall, where the first two victims were killed, were later released from the building by the police and allowed to attend their 9 a.m. classes. Two of those students then went to class in Norris Hall, where they were killed by the gunman.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/05/us/05virginia.html?emc=eta1>

Characterizing the Limitations of Third-Party EAS Over Cellular Text Messaging Services

Patrick Traynor, Ph.D. Assistant Professor at Georgia Institute of Technology
September 2008

Editor's Note: *This excerpt is from a 31 page report, and much of the article is very technical. Below is a synopsis of the relevant material found in this report:*

In this paper, we demonstrate the limitations of third party *Emergency Alert Systems* (EAS). In particular, because of the architecture of cellular networks, such systems will not be able to deliver a high volume of emergency messages in a short period of time. Through discussion, modeling and simulation, we show that current systems not only can not widely disseminate such messages quickly, but also that the addition traffic created by third party EAS may disrupt other traffic such as voice communications, including that of emergency responders or the public to 9-1-1 services.

Understanding the Mismatch

Having explored the technical details of alert message insertion and delivery in cellular networks, we now discuss why EAS over SMS in current systems is simply not feasible or recommended.

- **Cellular networks are not designed to delivery emergency-scale traffic loads:** Planning and deploying cellular networks is an expensive undertaking. From specially designed equipment to competition over scarce wireless spectrum, such systems must be carefully deployed so as to meet expected customer demand in an economically feasible manner. Like any other system, it is simply not possible for cellular networks to provide virtually unlimited capacities.
- **Targeting users in a specific location is extremely difficult:** One of the criticisms of more traditional EAS infrastructure is the lack of location specific information.
- **There is no way to authenticate the source of messages, making fraudulent alerts easy to send.**
- **SMS is not a real-time service:** Examples of the delay that can be experienced during times of high volume are most easily observed during New Years Eve celebrations. As hundreds of millions of users around the globe send celebratory greetings via SMS, service providers often become inundated with a flood of messages. Accordingly, the delivery of such messages has been noted to exceed more than six hours
- **Message delivery order is not always predictable**
http://safetyservices.ucdavis.edu/emergency-management/dru-1/alert-notification/Characterizing_the_Limitations_of_3rd_Party_EAS-Traynor_Sept08.pdf

Tsunami text warning fails

By BRONWYN TORRIE - Manawatu Standard

The failure of a tsunami text alert system yesterday has seen Horizons Regional Council dump the warning service.

About 400 people received a text nearly three hours after yesterday's tsunami was due to hit the region's shores.

The warning text was delivered about 11.56: "Estimated wave East Cape and Mt Maunganui 1m-0922. Stay tuned to local media for more information."

Horizons inherited the free text service last year when it took over Manawatu District Council's civil defense work, emergency services manager Shane Bayley said.

Mr Bayley immediately cancelled the service run by OPTN after complaints came in about the glitch. "It's just not good enough."

A Palmerston North man who signed up for the civil defence alerts in 2006 said the first text arrived after a tsunami wave measuring 40cm hit the East Cape.

"When I heard it's all over and done with, that's when I got the first text saying watch out for it. If you rely on it and it comes about three hours late you're done for."

A duplicate text was delivered minutes after the first. "They stuffed up."

Then an apologetic text was sent about 12.30pm: "The performance of the OPTN system this morning was not satisfactory. We will be investigating."

Another Palmerston North man who signed up to the alerts for Manawatu and Rodney District said he got the apology text between two warning text yesterday.

"There was also another text that I'm connected to with the Rodney District and their's was two hours late."

He had experienced similar delays when a lahar ran down Mt Ruapehu in 2007.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/2921072/Tsunami-text-warning-fails>

Text alert system found flawed in first university-wide test

By Jess Davis and Jeff Whitney

Edited by Eric Robbins

Posted April 24, 2008

A university-wide test of the University of South Carolina's emergency text-messaging system Wednesday failed to reach everyone on campus as quickly as administrators had hoped.

Sent around 3:30 p.m., the text message took an hour or more to reach many students, faculty and staff. It read, "Carolina ALERT: This is a TEST of the Carolina ALERT system. There is NOT an emergency. This is only a TEST."

Lizzie Wilson, a USC junior, got the text message about 30 minutes after it was sent.

Colleen Toman, a USC student and student officer with USC Police, didn't get the message. She said she thought she'd get notified sooner because she works with USCPD than through the new texting system, which worried her.

The alert system, started in August 2007, asked students, faculty and staff for cell phone numbers, and would notify them in case of a disaster. Text messaging will be the first step the university takes in alerting the campus to an emergency, followed by e-mail and voicemail, said Kim South, University Technology Services spokeswoman.

But text messaging isn't fail-safe, and should be combined with other ways of telling people something's wrong, said Dave Bujak, emergency



management coordinator at Florida State University, which started testing its text-alert system in January.

Sending such a large number of text messages can slow cell phone systems and clog cell towers, delaying the messages, he said. "Everyone thinks text messaging is instantaneous, but it gets bogged down," he said.

Florida State University simultaneously sends text messages, e-mails and sets off sirens to alert the campus of emergency, and follows up by updating the Web site.

South said USC is in the process of installing outdoor sirens that would be tied to the emergency system and would broadcast the same message sent to the students, faculty and staff.

USC police are scheduled for training next week in operating the new alert system, South said. Right now the school's technology services department sends the messages, she said.

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<http://www.datelinecarolina.org/Global/story.asp?S=8220187&nav=1VPx>

Student shot at Skyline College parking lot

Kevin Fagan, Jaxon Van Derbeken, Chronicle Staff Writers
Thursday, September 3, 2009

The shooting of an 18-year-old man at Skyline College in San Bruno on Wednesday afternoon sent people running for safety and briefly brought fears of a rampage.

It appears, however, that the attack in a parking lot was an isolated argument.

[2] | [Shaqqy](#)

Im very upset about the shooting at Skyline College, I am a student at Skyline College and I have Emergency Text Message set up with the school but unfortunately I didn't receive the text message till 7:04PM?? a few hours later?? The whole purpose of signing up for the Emergency Text Message at school is to receive immediate warning of any shootings, etc on campus but instead the text was received hours later after the shooting? Not very effective if you ask me!!

REPLY | SEPTEMBER 2, 2009 7:16 PM

[\[REPORT THIS \]](#)

News Article: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/03/MN7119HKE8.DTL>

Student Comment: http://sfist.com/2009/09/02/shooting_at_skyline_college_prompts.php#comment-2328653

UF to test new text alert system today

The new provider can send emergency voice messages and e-mail on one service.

By [Nathan Crabbe](#) Staff Writer

Published: Thursday, August 6, 2009 at 6:01 a.m.

The University of Florida is testing a new emergency text-messaging service today, replacing a system used to send an unauthorized text message on the night of President Obama's inauguration.

Tatum was charged with a second-degree felony after he was accused of sending the unauthorized message in January to about 46,000 current and former UF faculty, staff and students. While he said he was told the charges would be dropped, the State Attorney's Office reported the case remains open and that no decision has been made.

Santa Fe used Mobile Campus and is considering moving to Blackboard Connect, college officials said. The college had faced criticism for delays in sending messages under the old system, but Santa Fe Police Chief Daryl Johnston said the issue was about who could use the system rather than technology.

Texts are "not the perfect mechanism for sending out emergency messages," he said.



UF's old system was timed at sending a message to wireless carriers in about six minutes. Allen said most users received the message within 10 minutes but that differences in carriers meant some didn't receive the message for 30 minutes. Today's test will show whether the new system provides an improvement.

<http://www.gainesville.com/apps/pbcs.dll/search?category=search&crit=UF%20to%20test%20new%20text%20alert%20system%20today>

A student and professor from USF

Oct 5th, 2009 11:56 PM

"I, a student and professor at USF, was not sufficiently informed during the crisis. I do not get text messages under my phone plan. There were no emails sent out until after 3PM. The sirens cannot be heard inside any of the buildings I work in."

Campus emergency alerts 'effective' despite confusion

By Chadd Brown Kerry Klecic and Selma Younes, STAFF WRITERS

Published: Tuesday, October 6, 2009

Oscar Levy, a senior majoring in mechanical engineering, said he was outside Russell M. Cooper Hall when he received the first MoBull text message.

"I received the message about five minutes after everyone else," Levy said. "There was some lag involved."

Levy said by the time he heard the emergency alarm siren, **it was too late to get inside any buildings.**

"I heard the main alarm and then it reverberated, but everything was locked down, so I just made sure to stay ...

<http://www.usforacle.com/campus-emergency-alerts-effective-despite-confusion-1.1940368>



UT Campus Confused During USF Lockdown

Posted October 06 2009 at 8:04 pm
By Ellery McCardle

“We were getting phone calls that students were getting text alerts, but we don’t know where the texts were coming from,” said Kevin Howell, assistant director of Campus Safety and Security.

As it turned out, most UT students received the warning text messages from confused friends. Reports of a gunman occurred that day on the University of South Florida campus, not on the UT campus.”

<http://theminaretonline.com/?p=6268>

Let the Buyer Beware

May 1, 2008 12:00 PM, By Lynnette Luna

High-profile shootings at universities and major weather incidents such as hurricanes and floods have driven the proliferation of companies providing emergency alert services via mobile devices across campuses, large cities and even entire regions. But mobile operators now are warning that messages won't always reach recipients in a timely manner and sometimes not at all — a big problem when seconds truly count.

Indeed, incidents already have occurred where messages never reached the intended recipients or were delayed significantly. According to published reports, just hours after two graduate students at Louisiana State University were shot and killed in a campus apartment building in December, LSU leaders used the university's new emergency-notification system to issue text messages to about 8400 students who had opted in for the service. But a number of the messages never arrived.



In February, the University of Connecticut police sent a text message through the university's emergency system to 16,000 students, staff, parents and others after a hole was found in the ice on a nearby lake. But police said some people reported receiving the text message on their mobile phones up to an hour after the messages were sent, prompting campus police to search for a new emergency text message provider, according to *The Hartford Courant*.

"The one method that everyone has jumped on as the panacea [for these high-profile incidents] is alert messaging via the mobile phone. Most people do have access to a cell phone, and they are a convenient tool for alerting," said Bruce Lee, industry solutions manager for Sprint Nextel.

"What happens is that universities and other organizations are primarily looking at how easy and secure is this for [them] but not considering the fact that wireless networks have to be able to handle the load of messages," Lee said. "A lot of vendors are taking a list of messages and throwing it over the wall and leaving it on the doorstep of carriers, expecting them to deliver them."

Why can't commercial operators push all of these messages through? When one message sent to many people simply originates from the public e-mail gateway, as many of these emergency text messages do, the mobile network recognizes them as spam and keeps the messages from moving through.

Moreover, mobile networks were never built to handle a flood of messages at one time, Lee said. "No system has unlimited capacity. In reality, the current way all carriers around the world transmit messages is that one message to 10,000 people is 10,000 individual messages.

Jones stresses that SMS isn't the panacea for notifying students and staff of emergencies. Universities should use SMS as part of a holistic approach that could include other notification methods such as sirens, voicemail and resident assistants knocking on doors to warn students to stay in their dorm rooms.



Lee said. "Likewise, if any messaging provider guarantees delivery, you probably shouldn't choose them. No one can really guarantee delivery."

Operators, not surprisingly, are concerned about being blamed for not delivering critical messages when lives are at stake. "There is an interesting liability conversation that goes on within the walls of carriers," Jones said. "Carriers are backing off [and] saying, 'We can't guarantee delivery, and let the buyer beware.'"

According to Lee, industry and government is working on creating a single standard for cell broadcasts that brings along an ecosystem with it, but how quickly that could happen remains to be seen. Such a technology would need to be implemented at every cell site and in every handset, which costs money.

'Monkey' Texter Hopes to Avoid Serious Penalty

January 30, 2009 4:44 PM

ABC News On Campus reporter Miles Doran blogs:

The man who confessed to accidentally sending a bizarre text-message to more than 40,000 students, faculty and staff at the University of Florida via the school's emergency alert system says he is hoping to avoid jail time.

http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=59391672914



Inexplicable Violence Again Shakes Va. Tech

By Brigid Schulte and Theresa Vargas
Washington Post Staff Writers
Friday, January 23, 2009; Page B01

After Wednesday's stabbing, the first e-mail and text alerts were sent at 7:44 p.m., said Larry Hincker, a Virginia Tech spokesman, warning students and teachers that a "murder" had taken place and telling everyone to stay where they were. More than 60,000 messages were sent in 33 minutes, Hincker said.

Some students said they didn't get the message until almost 8:20 p.m. and complained that they heard the news by word of mouth. "I was really angry," said Megan Meadows, a Virginia Tech senior and friend of Reema Samaha, who was among those killed in 2007. "It took 20, 25 minutes to get the message, and by then I'd already heard the news," Meadows said. "Why have this expensive alert system if it's not going to function properly?"

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/22/AR2009012200943.html?tid=informbox>

Cities Rethink High-Tech Alert Systems

By Alan Gomez, USA TODAY 07/06/2009

Cities are having second thoughts about alerting residents to natural disasters and catastrophes via their cellphones and computers because of the expense, technological hurdles and whether it's the best way to warn.

When a tornado was reported near Fort Collins, Colo., in June, about 100,000 people who were supposed to receive alerts via their cellphones and e-mail inboxes never got the message.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-07-06-ealerts_N.htm



Hampton University officials say campus safe after shootings

Campus emergency alerts were sent out two hours after incident

BY DAN PARSONS AND PETER DUJARDIN

Daily Press, Newport News, Va.

Updated: 04-27-2009 6:49 am

The first alert -- sent by text message, e-mail and an automated message to dorm phones -- was sent at 3 a.m., Harvey said during a Sunday afternoon press conference.

Freshman Ashley Daniels, 19, received a text message from the school about 6 a.m. that said there had been a shooting but the campus was safe. Her friend Erica Evans, also a freshman, said she walks to her dorm from work at an off-campus Burger King about 1 a.m. but was not alerted and would not have known of any possible danger. Both said campus police could do better at patrolling the school grounds.

"It should have been quicker," Daniels said. "We didn't get anything about the shooting. We found out what happened from friends.

"We first heard that people had been killed. There were all sorts of rumors."

Some students said they didn't receive a text message or an e-mail from university officials at all. Others said no message was sent alerting students to the shooting, but an all-clear message was sent later Sunday morning.

University officials said the text-message alert system is voluntary and students must sign up to receive them. All students are supposed to receive an emergency alert through their campus e-mail accounts.

Freshman Ashley Jeter said she was signed up to receive emergency text messages from the school but did not receive one.



Jeter, 18, who lives in a dorm next to Harkness Hall, said at first she thought the commotion was a fire drill. She then learned of the shooting on Facebook, a popular social networking Web site.

About 3 a.m., Jeter said an automated message was left on her dorm phone.

"By that time, I had already gotten calls from friends that knew what was going on," Jeter said. "The police didn't know who the shooter was at first, and he could have been anyone ... anywhere on campus, and we didn't know about it until two hours later."

Leha Byrd said there might have been a malfunction with the system, or students who thought they were signed up actually were not.

"We're not sure what the glitch was," said Byrd.

http://articles.dailypress.com/2009-04-27/news/0904260149_1_dorm-delivery-man-campus

Text Alerts in Gunman Scare Didn't Reach All at USF, Professor and Students Say

By Richard Danielson and Alexandra Zayas,
Sunday, October 11, 2009

University of South Florida assistant professor Rick Wilber wanted more information — right away.

But he said he didn't receive USF's "MoBull" text alert about a possible gunman. Nor did many of the 240 or so students in BSN 1100, a lecture hall in the College of Business, where cell phone reception is spotty.



In response, USF says it continues to expand and improve its alert system. But neither the text messages nor the sirens are meant to be the sole means of telling people about an emergency.

"Even if a small number of people get the text message, that's enough to alert the whole class, which is what happened in the basement classroom," said USF spokesman Michael Hoad, who plays a big role in planning for campus-wide alerts.

Nevertheless, students described not getting text alerts in the main library where the intruder was thought to be and in Cooper Hall, an arts and sciences building east of the library.

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/college/text-alerts-in-gunman-scare-didnt-reach-all-at-usf-professor-and-students/1042857>

Friday Text Message Test Deemed a Success

University of Florida News

InsideUF (Campus)

Top Stories on Friday, October 30, 2009

Eight minutes and two seconds elapsed from the time a University Police Department dispatcher sent the text message until the last batch of messages left Blackboard Connect, the text message service provider. A total of 61,475 text messages was sent.

University officials said prior to the test that anything less than 10 minutes would be acceptable.

<http://news.ufl.edu/2009/10/30/friday-text-message-test-deemed-a-success/>

Editor's Note: *While a total of 61,475 text messages were sent, it is unknown how many were received.*