

# AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT

## *"The Communicator<sup>Ô</sup>" for Enhanced Public Safety & Awareness*

*A high-speed emergency notification system to alert citizens during critical events*

### **WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (ENS)?**

Most Austin residents know to call 911 in an emergency. "The Communicator<sup>TM</sup>" Emergency Notification System (ENS) allows the Austin Police Department to call the public in a potential emergency. The high-speed ENS communicates important time-sensitive information from law enforcement and public safety agencies simultaneously to large groups of people (citizens) via pre-recorded telephone messages, text fax and e-mail messages. Most homes and businesses have a telephone, home computer, and/or a fax machine, which unlike radio and television does not have to be switched on to receive a message. The critical information is sure to be heard by the target audience, unlike sirens or a mobile loudspeaker announcement.

"The Communicator<sup>TM</sup>" ENS has proven to be one of the most effective new technological tools to assist law enforcement in implementing community policing strategies such as mobilizing the extra eyes and ears of residents in a neighborhood when a child or elderly person is missing.

### **HOW WILL THE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM BE USED?**

The ENS will be used to give the public warnings and information on:

- ◆ Natural disasters, such as severe weather warnings, tornadoes and floods
- ◆ Hazardous material releases
- ◆ Evacuation notifications
- ◆ Safe return notifications
- ◆ Road closing announcements
- ◆ Missing children or elderly persons
- ◆ Search and rescue operations
- ◆ Major Power Outages
- ◆ Public Health Crises
- ◆ Abduction and hostage situations
- ◆ Prison escapes

### **HOW DOES THE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM WORK?**

The ENS is designed so law enforcement and public safety departments can create and launch an emergency message in just a few minutes. A precise geographic area can be targeted and saturated with thousands of calls per hour based on the severity of the situation. The entire process to set up an outbound calling session, record a message and launch the calls takes just a few minutes, but has the potential to save hundreds of lives.

- ◆ The first step is selecting the geographic location or list to receive the message.
- ◆ The next step is recording the message.
- ◆ The final step is launching the message.

The ENS will call each number in the database for the specified area. The recording is played when the phone is picked up, or left on an answering machine if applicable. If there is no answer, or if the line is busy the ENS will try two more times to deliver the message.

The Communicator is the most effective high-speed notification system that combines digital, street level GIS integration through its desktop mapping interface. The Communicator utilizes the most accurate phone data base available for geographical selection of targeted notification areas, including homes, businesses, schools, and special needs locations. Fast and efficient, The Communicator is unmatched in its ability to alert people by phone, pager, cellular, fax and e-mail, delivering incident-specific information and life-saving instruction.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM?**

#### ***Will the Emergency Notification System be available for hearing impaired?***

The Emergency Notification System has ability to call TTY/TDD.

#### ***Will the Emergency Notification System be available in foreign languages?***

The Emergency Notification System can be recorded in any language. Initially, ENS messages will be recorded in English and Spanish.

***Will I be called by ENS if I have an unlisted telephone number?*** People who have unlisted numbers will be called by the ENS.

### **WHO WILL ENTER MESSAGES IN THE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM?**

Designated personnel in the Austin Police Department will have the authorization to enter messages in the ENS.

### **WHEN SHOULD CITIZENS CALL 911?**

Call 911 to report life-threatening incidents, any crimes that are in progress, and all serious or violent crimes. Typical 911 calls include:

- ◆ Fire and medical emergencies
- ◆ All violent crimes, such as homicides, robberies, and sexual assaults
- ◆ Domestic violence
- ◆ Home or business intruders
- ◆ Gunshots or person with a gun
- ◆ Property crimes that are still in progress, or where the offender is still on the scene
- ◆ Vehicle accidents involving injury, major property damage, or serious traffic tie-ups

### **WHEN SHOULD CITIZENS CALL 311?**

Call 311 to report incidents and situations that are non-emergencies, non-life threatening, or not currently in progress. Use 311 to request information from the Police Department. Typical 311 calls include:

- ◆ Property crimes that are no longer in progress and the offender is no longer on the scene (for example, vandalism, theft, graffiti, stolen autos, and garage burglaries)
- ◆ Animal control problems
- ◆ Illegally-parked vehicles or vehicles blocking alleys or driveways
- ◆ Telephone numbers, addresses, and hours of operation of the Police Department's divisions or programs