

City of La Verne Launches Blackboard Connect to Enhance Emergency Preparedness and Communication

La Verne residents can register their contact information and preferences to receive urgent notifications and important updates

City of La Verne has selected *Blackboard Connect™*, a leading mass notification platform, to facilitate important communication and emergency preparedness.

La Verne implemented Blackboard Connect so city officials can stay connected to residents and efficiently provide them with direction in the event of any disaster. Using Blackboard Connect, officials can record and send an unlimited number of personalized voice messages to home phones, businesses, local agencies and mobile phones in just minutes. The service also sends email, text messages (SMS) to mobile phones and posts on Facebook, RSS feeds and Twitter channels. Messages can also be sent to TTY/TDD devices for people who are hearing impaired.

“Keeping our community safe and informed is our top priority, which is why we need to be able to communicate with residents quickly in an urgent situation,” said Police Chief Scott Pickwith. “Blackboard Connect enables us to communicate efficiently with residents in just a matter of minutes, helping save valuable time, use resources efficiently and protect our community.”

City officials can target each message to an unlimited number of groups. Authorized users can also use the system’s geo-mapping and group subscription features to contact residents based on specific geographical locations and interests, helping ensure recipients receive relevant, targeted information.

“With Blackboard Connect, we know our residents are receiving the information that matters most to them, whether it’s an urgent situation or routine community update,” said Police Captain Nick Paz. “I strongly encourage residents to register their contact information and update their message preferences into the system’s secure database so they are prepared to receive important notifications.”

Publicly available primary residential and business phones in La Verne will automatically be included in the system. However, to ensure the city has the most up-to-date contact information, including cell phone numbers and email addresses, residents should visit the Police Department website (www.lvpd.org) and click on the link that says “BLACKBOARD CONNECT,” and provide their complete contact information. Users should also manage their message preferences by indicating their preferred mode of contact, language and message topics.



Blackboard Connect Frequently Asked Questions

How does the Blackboard Connect work?

Blackboard Connect combines the power of the Internet with the pervasiveness of the telephone and cell phones to give officials an affordable and easy-to-use tool to reach out to community members. Officials record a voice message in their own voice using just a telephone or type a message to be sent to text receiving devices. In all, the multi-modal platform helps officials reach community members:

- o Voice messages to home phones, work phones, and mobile phones;
- o Text messages (SMS) to mobile phones;
- o Email;
- o Posts to RSS feeds and Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- o TTY/TDD devices for people who are hearing impaired; and
- o Devices capable of accepting Common Alert Protocol (CAP) messages.

What is multi-modal communication? Are text messages alone sufficient?

During a time-sensitive situation, sending messages via multiple modes of communication maximizes the opportunity to reach intended recipients. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 31 percent of Americans said they preferred texts to talking on the phone, while 53 percent said they preferred a voice call to a text message and another 14 percent said the contact method they prefer depends on the situation. Communication can be sent simultaneously to all available contact points for each person.

Relying on any single way to reach constituents (whether it is through just voice calls or just SMS) introduces a single point of failure. As with any communication vehicle, it is important to combine voice, text-messaging and email to better ensure that you can reach your community in as many ways possible.

With Blackboard Connect, officials can reach their community members in their own voice (at landlines, cell phones, and via email) and via text messages (at cell phones, PDAs/other text-receiving devices, email accounts, and TTY/TDD receiving devices for the hearing impaired). Messages are also posted on RSS feeds, Facebook and Twitter channels, allowing the information to be circulated in multiple ways and helping to ensure that the community receives important information, wherever they are located.

How has the Blackboard Connect been used?

Blackboard Connect has been used to communicate vital information such as severe weather alerts, evacuation notices, missing children and other important issues. Additionally, some municipalities use the service for more routine communication, such as community events and utility reminders.

How does Blackboard Connect get access to residents' and businesses' contact information?

Blackboard Connect obtains access to contact information in the following three ways:

1. Data provided by local landlines
2. Data that Blackboard Connect licenses from its data provider
3. Data that residents input through the portal

Additionally, citizens are encouraged to ensure that their contact information is up to date so that officials can contact them should an issue occur.

Does Blackboard Connect share residents' information with anyone?

No. Blackboard Connect does not rent, trade, or sell recipient contact data and will only disclose information as necessary to comply with applicable laws and government orders or to operate or maintain Blackboard Connect mass notification services.