

Anne Arundel Medical Center

Annapolis, Maryland

Customer Spotlight

Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) opened in a small cottage in 1902 as “The Annapolis Emergency Hospital.” This was the first hospital in the Annapolis area, created by a group of “enlightened and energetic townswomen” because of the need for better health care in the area. Today, more than 100 years later, Anne Arundel Health System is a regional medical center serving 1.2 million residents.

Being Prepared

While no one ever hopes that emergencies or disasters will happen, AAMC has taken steps to ensure that they react quickly in any type of urgent situation. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, AAMC began to search for an automated notification system to meet their needs.

Kevin Burns, Manager of Telecommunications at AAMC, received several demos of **AMTELCO’s RED ALERT Emergency and Event**

Notification system. According to Burns, “Quality and patient safety is paramount at AAMC, and this just seemed like a perfect solution for us. We particularly appreciate the updates that increase the efficiency and capabilities of the system. The updates keep coming along, and we keep doing more, and different, things with it.”

Using Automation to Eliminate Confusion

Before switching to RED ALERT, AAMC was using a paging terminal to send out numeric pages when an alert was issued. “When these alerts occurred, it was a madhouse in the call center, just trying to notify that many people. It was not a terribly efficient process. Operators were dialing out and trying to verify notification to hundreds of people. The people

called back on the same number that the operators were calling out from, so they were overwhelmed and nobody was getting consistent information,” said Burns. Because the paging terminal wouldn’t send text messages, four nines (9999) designated emergencies, but operators had no way to let recipients know the reason for the alert, until they called back in.

“When we activate an alert now, there is no significant spike in volume to the call center; we’re just business as usual. RED ALERT is just more accurate; we don’t have to worry about someone being skipped. It’s just very, very efficient. We’re happy now,” stated Burns.



Alert. Respond. Communicate. Instantly!

Fast Notification

AAMC uses RED ALERT primarily for internal alerts. These include alerting physicians and staff about incoming patients, notifying staff of severe weather conditions, activating a Code Pink (baby abduction), Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HEICS), and Pre-Yellow conditions to alert the staff that the emergency room is filling up.

Depending on the type of emergency or event, AAMC uses RED ALERT to automatically contact the specific groups of physicians, nurses and staff members needed. When three bus loads of students were involved in an accident in May, for example, they quickly alerted pediatricians and internal medicine staff. They were prepared to notify orthopedics and dentists, if needed, but luckily the accident was minor so no additional notifications were needed.

Remote Access

Since RED ALERT is Web-based, AAMC is able to issue alerts quickly from virtually anywhere. Even at 2 or 3 a.m., “I could converse with the operators, and sit at

home and not be delayed by the 35 mile commute,” said Burns.

Multiple Contact Methods

To help ensure physicians and staff receive alerts quickly, AAMC broadcasts alerts to office phones, cell phones, home phones and pagers. Physicians and staff are notified also by SMS, e-mail, and/or voice text-to-speech messages. This ensures that no matter where physicians and staff are, they get the message quickly.

According to Burns, “Actually, the worst complaint I get now is too much notification.” RED ALERT offers cascading options to try an office number first, then a home number. However, AAMC wants to contact them via all available methods to ensure they get the message as quickly as possible.

Staying Prepared

AAMC holds several practice drills each year to ensure everything is working as expected. These include practice alerts with Anne Arundel County, as well as one with the Naval Academy. Burns said, “What it does is exercise our teamwork with the Naval Academy because we would be the closest medical center to them in the event of some sort of a military disaster or trauma issue.”

“One” Source

AAMC also uses an AMTELCO *Infinity* system for their call center. They use the *Infinity* Conference Bridge extensively, and although they haven’t needed it yet, they could use this to create conference calls for ongoing communications during emergency

situations.

Because of the seamless integration of systems, AAMC liked the idea of utilizing another AMTELCO product to handle their emergency notification needs.

Detailed Reporting

“It took exactly one debriefing after RED ALERT was installed and tested for the ‘You didn’t call me,’ complaint to go away,” stated Burns. “Before RED ALERT, I used to get literally 10 to 20 people complaining every time we sent out an alert. That just doesn’t happen anymore.”

RED ALERT’s reporting also takes care of JCAHO situations, where documentation is needed.

When the call center is notified that an alert was not received, they also can use the reports to see the numbers called. Often, they find the cause of the problem is that a recipient has a new phone number, which hasn’t been given to the hospital.

Even More Convenience

AAMC will soon be implementing the AMTELCO “Just Say It” speech recognition system, allowing physicians to simply say if they are able to respond and eliminating the need for them to press touch tones to respond to an alert.

Another feature they plan to use is Alert Scheduling, which will allow them to set up notifications to all the groups to update their membership and contact information. Burns said, “Keeping the contact information and group information updated has been the biggest challenge we’ve had. The scheduling piece will be a huge help.”



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