

## Investment in Mass Communication System Proves Beneficial

Weatherford, TX – Reliable emergency warning systems are much needed assets in warning citizens of natural or man-made disasters. Emergency management officials in Tyler County quickly found out just how advantageous a warning system could be.

In a two-month span, Parker County was named in two disaster declarations – March’s incident description included severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding. April’s included severe storms and flooding.

Reportedly, residents in low-lying areas of Parker County found themselves dealing with the worst flooding they had seen in at least a decade.

“We deemed our investment into the emergency notification system to be very worthwhile,” said Joel Kertok, Project Coordinator and Public Information Officer for Parker County. “Between tornadoes and floods, March and April, 2016 were very rough months for Parker County.”

According to Kertok, the message sent out alerting residents in the area of the March 7 tornado warning reached 315 people. Those were residents in or near the location of the tornado that hit just east of Cool, Texas.

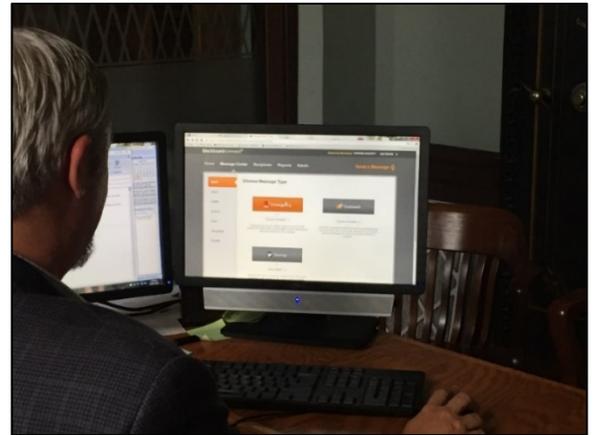
“While the system did not mitigate the property damage, we believe strongly that it assisted in mitigating both injuries and death. Thankfully no one was hurt by the very destructive tornado,” Kertok said.

On April 17, Kertok sent out an emergency notification call that reached 256 people living along the Brazos River in Parker County. The message notified them of the rising flood waters and the expected crest downstream. Every community along the Brazos in Parker County found themselves dealing with flooding. The river came up fast.

“While property damage was inevitable, no lives were lost,” said Kertok.

A total of 20 emergency calls were made in March and April to a total of 213,422 phones.

Kertok acknowledged that their emergency notification system has reached literally tens of thousands of residents throughout Parker County via phone calls, text messages, or emails warning them of other severe weather or flash flood warnings issued by the National Weather Service.



Joel Kertok, Project Coordinator and Public Information Officer uses a mass communication to warn residents of impending danger.

Photo by: Brandy Bissland



The March 7, 2016 tornado damaged this Parker County home. Residents took refuge in their residential safe room.

Photo by: Joel Kertok



Mass Communication systems send a single message to multiple individuals. Citizens can be reached via phone, text message, email, instant message, and secure mobile apps. While these systems provide multiple benefits, they require planning prior to implementation.

Some of the benefits include:

- Most systems are able to send voice messaging, text messaging and email messaging to masses in a matter of minutes; the system allows for real time communication.
- With an automated notification system, communication is consistent to a wide range of people.
- The systems notify all critical members within an organization. This is especially beneficial to first responders during emergency situations.

For additional information, visit:

- [www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system](http://www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system)
- [www.ready.gov/business/implementation/crisis](http://www.ready.gov/business/implementation/crisis)
- [www.parkercountytx.com/](http://www.parkercountytx.com/).



Residents had already evacuated this home located near the Brazos River prior to it being inundated by floodwaters.

Photo by: Joel Kertok