

CASE STUDY: Denver International Airport



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS: DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT MOBILIZES RESPONSE TEAM WITH SEND WORD NOW®

On December 20, 2008, an aborted takeoff resulted in an airplane runway crash at Denver International Airport (DIA). All 110 passengers and five crew members were evacuated from the airplane and survived. Send Word Now was used within minutes to alert staff and to help the airport public relations team respond to the incident.

On Call

On Saturday, December 20, 2008, at 6:18 pm, an aborted takeoff resulted in an airplane veering off a runway and skidding to a stop in a field at Denver International Airport. All 110 passengers and five crew members were safely evacuated from the airplane. Before the quick evacuation, the plane caught fire from a ruptured fuel tank on the right wing. Denver International Airport staff immediately issued a message to the public relations and marketing first response team, advising them of the incident and requesting that they report to the airport.

The entire first response team received the emergency messages instantaneously and responded immediately. DIA public relations spokesman Steve Klodt was at home at the time, and was able to receive the message via his home phone due to Send Word Now's cascading capability. The call rang his office phone, then his business cell phone, his personal cell phone, and his home phone, where he finally received and responded to the message. "We were able to hold two press conferences within three hours, and that's because we were able to notify and get staff to report quickly," said Klodt.

The public relations team was charged with communicating with airport staff and getting information out to the media and the public. The crash was the first incident where the SWN Alert Service was activated during off hours, when many airport staff were dispersed across various locations when the message went out.

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-Steve Klodt
DIA Public Relations

Why Send Word Now

Klodt became aware of Send Word Now when they were looking to replace a paging system for DIA's public relations and marketing department and managers. The system they replaced was becoming obsolete as staff replaced outdated pagers with new devices ranging from BlackBerry® smartphones to cell phones. The airport needed a new system that could contact people via all of the modern communication devices they carried or used daily, including home and office landline phones, business and personal cell phones, email, and BlackBerry smartphones, with both voice and text messages. Another important requirement was the ability to prioritize message sending to specific contact points so that if team members could not be reached via one contact point, he or she could be reached through others.

Denver International Airport Public Relations and Marketing implemented the Send Word Now system to help communicate about various airport events, respond to the media, and remain informed about a crisis. DIA wanted a system to communicate incidents on weekends, evenings, and off hours in the event of an emergency. "Airports are a 24-hour operation," said Klodt. "DIA is a constant source of news, and we have constant interaction with print and broadcast media."

The ability to set up customized groups of people and instantly send messages to multiple contact points greatly enhances the ability of airport personnel to manage a critical event. The advanced reporting capabilities provided by Send Word Now's AlertTracer® feature are another commonly cited benefit of the Send Word Now system.

Beyond Emergencies

The DIA public relations team is looking into using Send Word Now for other types of events involving day-to-day operations where immediate communication to multiple people is necessary. Some examples might include flight delays, disruptions in shuttle service, and airport closures due to severe weather.