



# Mitigating Chaos with Real-Time, Streamlined Emergency Communication Tools

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Many years ago, I was working as a public safety telecommunicator and received a 9-1-1 call from a child. The call disconnected before I got many details, but I was able to send a return text to the number and ask if the child needed assistance. The reply I received was, “Yes, my mom is in danger.” I then gathered enough information through a quick series of text messages to dispatch responders to the location. Upon arrival, the responders stopped a man who intended to break into the house and assault his partner—the child’s mother. The authorities arrived in time to arrest the man without anyone getting hurt.

Seconds save lives, and in that situation, I had a solution that offered me a way to quickly communicate when our first option was no longer available. Emergencies will happen, whether you’re ready for them or not. And when you have to think fast and make split-second decisions, having the right tools in your arsenal will help to mitigate chaos as much as possible.



## Customer

Eaton County is home to 100,000+ people in the Lansing metro area. The Eaton County Central Dispatch covers 579 square miles of residential and commercial properties, including smaller cities like Charlotte, Eaton Rapids, and Grand Ledge.

## Industry

State & Local

## Challenges solved

- Safety & Protection
- Critical Communication
- Mass Notification

## Solutions

- Rave Alert

## Adapting to changing communication expectations

Streamlining emergency communications is paramount for our county in South Central Michigan. Eaton County is home to 100,000+ people in the Lansing metro area. We cover 579 square miles of residential and commercial properties, including smaller cities like Charlotte, Eaton Rapids, and Grand Ledge. The Eaton County Central Dispatch team acts as a go-between for the county's emergency services, which include seven police departments, 13 fire departments, and two separate EMS agencies.

I've been with Eaton County for more than 16 years. I started as a telecommunicator, and today I'm the director of Eaton County Central Dispatch. We all know how much has changed over the past 16 years, and that includes the method and pace of communication between emergency responders and the public. Increasingly accessible technology and the rapid speed of information have changed the expectations of Eaton County residents. Our community members don't want to seek out information on more traditional channels like TV or radio during an emergency. They now expect immediate information delivered to them seamlessly on a mobile device.

Back in 2015, it became clear to Eaton County Central Dispatch that adopting a suite of communication and incident management tools would be the most valuable thing we could do for our community. By taking a multimodal approach to our communications, we could not only streamline and target our messages to our citizens, we could respond to emergencies faster and convey more detailed information.

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**ENP, MPA, Eaton County Central Dispatch**

Eaton County Central Dispatch decided to upgrade our network with innovations from Rave Mobile Safety, which is part of the Motorola Solutions safety ecosystem. We acquired our first piece of the critical communications puzzle, Rave Alert, back in 2015. We use Rave Alert to send mass notifications to community members in the event of an urgent local situation, such as a traffic accident, a road closure, severe weather, or even an emergency shelter-in-place order. These alerts save people the time and hassle of dealing with unexpected detours and improve responder safety by reducing traffic around these areas.





Another benefit of Rave Alert is that the technology allows our agency to offer the public ongoing, fact-based communication. People have become so accustomed to public messaging that if they don't have up-to-the-minute details of a situation, they'll make up their own story—which is sometimes very different from what's actually happening. Thankfully, we can use Rave Alert to update the public with continuous real-time messaging. Rave Alert prevents people from creating (and spreading) potentially misinformed narratives that could be more harmful than helpful as situations evolve. We can also share instructions on what to do in a given situation, so that people can take protective measures and make informed choices about where they go and what they do.

Smaller communities use Rave Alert to send hyper-localized community alerts, too. For example, the City of Grand Ledge, Charlotte, and Eaton Rapids, can send targeted alerts to people who have opted into their program, informing community members about upcoming hydrant flushing, leaf pickup, and even water bill due dates. These non-urgent alerts strengthen the connection between community and safety, building trust in the platform and local authorities.

Rave Alert can do so much and is so simple to use. I log into the platform, navigate to the text box, write the emergency message, and then click "submit." Mobile devices receive the message within seconds, making our community safer and more informed. And since all of our supervisors are trained to send alerts, everyone on staff has the power to communicate with the community in the event of an emergency. And all of this is just the tip of the iceberg.

## Filling the gap of the lost landline

Rave Alert greatly impacted our work at Eaton County Central dispatch, so we tried another Rave product, Rave911 Suite and its community-facing component, Smart911.

Everyone used to have a home phone and a landline connected to their address, so emergency dispatch operators could quickly determine a caller's name and address based on their phone number. These days, almost nobody has a landline phone, meaning emergency dispatch must spend time collecting and verifying information on a 9-1-1 call—seconds that could cost lives.

Rave allows users to enter their vital information into a Smart911 profile, which emergency responders can see whenever they (or anyone on their profile) makes an emergency call. If someone calls with a medical emergency, their Smart911 profile appears, and dispatch can see if they have any preexisting conditions or special circumstances that need to be considered. If someone calls to report a house fire, we know whether gas hookups are on the property. Users can add children, secondary contacts, and pets to a profile, along with current medications or special needs—anything that might be valuable for first responders to know for optimal situational awareness.

## No need to panic when you have rave

We obtained a school safety grant to explore the Rave Panic Button app, which instantly communicates any emergency to 9-1-1 while simultaneously connecting to on-site personnel and first responders. We've deployed the app throughout the Eaton County government complex and within schools in and around Eaton County. All enrolled phones in an organization receive a message when someone hits the panic button, meaning everyone can go on lockdown before responders even arrive.

We've used the solution during active violence incident drills and exercises, and it helps us get everyone on the same page in minutes. I don't have to wait on hold for up to 15 minutes to relay critical safety information to a school principal. Instead, we can connect with all key campus safety stakeholders—teachers, school staff, district administrators, and first responders—in just one tap and



share information in real-time. No one is left in the dark about whether they're in danger and can take the steps necessary to follow the school's protocol for such an event.

People are increasingly using Rave Panic Button for non-emergency purposes, too. We go into schools to educate staff about Rave Panic Button and answer any questions. We also show them what it looks like when 9-1-1 receives a Rave Panic Button call. After the presentation, people will tell us, "I didn't want this, but now I do." The app has helped school systems open the lines of communication, fostering deeper discussions about emergency incidents and having conversations about the important role of cameras and mapping solutions in school security. It has prompted greater integration between public safety agencies and school officials—and that collaboration is essential when it comes to keeping our students, school personnel, and responders safe. It's also opened the door for more general 9-1-1 education and awareness opportunities, such as speaking engagements that allow our staff to talk about the importance of staying on the phone during an emergency call.

Eaton County Central Dispatch is currently exploring three other Rave Mobile Safety solutions that will positively impact our area:

- **Rave Aware:** A holistic platform where public safety agencies compile critical information into a single place to speed response, alert key stakeholders, and collaborate across jurisdictions during complex incidents. This tool offers the ability to set up proximity alerts, which will allow schools or other soft targets to be notified about criminal or suspicious activity within a certain radius of a campus.
- **Rave Collaborate:** A solution that automates task assignments for our internal team, so nothing falls through the cracks during an emergency.
- **Rave Facility:** A tool that gives Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and public safety agencies important facility information such as floor plans, buildings, fire and utility information, and more during an emergency event.

Although we haven't had much time to take a deep dive into these tools yet, we love all the possibilities. We hope our neighboring counties will adopt Rave Aware, too, so we can maximize cross-jurisdictional data sharing for all parties. My next task is to create checklists in Rave Collaborate to account for all major incidents, which will eventually automate and assign tasks that need to happen in an emergency.





## Simplifying the role of first responders and spreading the word

Rave Mobile Safety has allowed Eaton County Central Dispatch to streamline communications in dozens of environments and situations. Having one vendor means we don't have to piece everything together separately—all our solutions are accessible from a single dashboard, so dispatch teams don't have to sift through as many programs and screens to find information that informs response and improves situational awareness. Accomplishing multiple tasks from one platform saves time and allows us to reallocate precious seconds that can ultimately change the outcome of an emergency.

These days, we're using outside-the-box initiatives to spread awareness of our public-facing Rave solutions. We've created digital images with instructions on what to

do in certain situations, and we push that information out through the app itself. We also have guidance on how to sign up for Smart911 on our company's vehicle, which we drive in parades and display at other events. We hand out swag like cups and fidget spinners and distribute cards with QR codes so people can learn more and sign up quickly. The fruits of our labor are paying off—we have 11,406 Smart911 profiles so far, and that number continues to grow.

Anything that saves time and offers first responders more information in an emergency is incredibly valuable. Partnering with Rave Mobile Safety has allowed Eaton County Central Dispatch to serve our community with personalized touchpoints, leading to a smarter response and safer outcomes for everyone involved.

To learn more, visit: [www.motorolasolutions.com](http://www.motorolasolutions.com)



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