

Keeping Constituents Informed and Aware

On the afternoon of August 23, 2007, the Barrington Hills Police Department responded to two issues impacting village residents: a reported car chase, which resulted in a hit-and-run car accident, and a flooding incident.

Problem: Like the Old Adage, 'When It Rains...'

The Police Department was initially notified that a driver involved in the car chase may have been armed and dangerous. Immediately, the Police Department notified surrounding law enforcement agencies and began to coordinate regional communications and traffic plans. Simultaneously, the Village experienced torrential rain downpours, leading to flood concerns.

Solution: Blackboard Connect

At 2:19 p.m., Barrington Hills Police Chief Michael Murphy quickly utilized the Blackboard Connect service to alert residents of the potentially armed driver. Using a map on the service's interface, officials were able to send messages only to residents surrounding the scene of the accident, informing them of the police activity. A short time later, the chase area expanded when the driver fled the scene and at 3:02 p.m. a second message was sent to the entire Village notifying residents of a regional search and increased police activity.



Quick Facts

- Population: 3,900
- 40 miles northwest of Chicago
- Blackboard Connect client since May 2007
- <http://www.barringtonhills-il.gov>

A third message, describing the suspects, was sent to all Village residents at 4:11 p.m. As police focused their efforts on finding the suspects, at 6:21 p.m. an additional message was sent to update residents on the progress of the search.

Once torrential rain downpours began, Chief Murphy distributed a Village-wide message at 8:48 p.m. warning about flooding and advising residents to avoid driving through flooded areas.

At 2:57 p.m. the next day, a final message was sent to residents alerting them that the suspects had not been captured but the Police had reason to believe they had left the area.

With each call placed, Police officials included pertinent information, provided next steps and informed residents when they could expect the next update.

Result: Residents Happy and Informed

Local law enforcement officials were able to keep order and ensure safety by notifying and updating residents in real-time using the Blackboard Connect service. Further, they were able to focus on the task at hand—securing the neighborhood and resolving the situation—rather than expending valuable resources and time going door-to-door with information. Municipal leaders in the Village found that the notifications greatly reduced the number of residents who would typically come to the scene out of curiosity or who would call 9-1-1 after witnessing police activity in their neighborhood.

In addition, Chief Murphy noted that sending a message to mobile phones, prevented drivers from entering both the area affected by the car chase and, later, flooded roads.

“Using the [Blackboard Connect] service kept residents happy and informed. I am grateful that the Mayor and Village Trustees had the foresight to see a need for the system.”

Chief Michael Murphy
*Barrington Hills Police Dept.
Village of Barrington Hills, IL*

According to the Police Chief, local residents appreciated the updates provided by the Blackboard Connect service and have come to depend on the system to be notified of important issues.

The Mayor and Village Trustees appreciated that the service allows for unlimited use, allowing six Village-wide calls to be made in 24 hours which:

- a) reduced overall overhead and expenditures typically needed prior to having the service, such as bringing in off-duty police officers; and
- b) didn't require the Village to allocate and spend against a contingency fund as they would have with a per-call plan.

“Before implementing the Blackboard Connect service, the Police Department was inundated with phone calls asking for information about any police activity,” said Chief Murphy. “Using the [Blackboard Connect] service kept residents happy and informed. I am grateful that the Mayor and Village Trustees had the foresight to see a need for the system.”