

Allianz Global Investors maintains steady communications in a crisis

Allianz Global Investors, a member of the Allianz Group and a financial services leader, was well prepared with a disaster recovery and business continuity plan for any unexpected emergency. When a call came regarding a large nearby oil leak, it was time to put the disaster plan into effect.

THE CHALLENGE

Allianz Global Investors' comprehensive disaster recovery and business continuity plan was put to the test by a large oil leak.

THE RESULTS:

The Allianz management team relied on AlertFind to smoothly oversee the safety, business operations, and administration of 190 employees impacted by an oil leak, which required office shut-down and relocation for three days.

By activating their AlertFind emergency notification system, the Allianz management team was able to efficiently manage and oversee the safety, business operations, and administration of all employees who were impacted by the oil leak – which spanned three work days and required mandatory evacuations. AlertFind provided a fast, easy, and reliable service that allowed the Allianz team to set up on-demand emergency management team conference calls, deliver regular disaster update messages to all staff, and reassign employees to different office locations to maintain critical business functions.

RESPONDING TO UNEXPECTED CRISIS

The unlikely chain of events started late on a Monday afternoon. As billions of dollars in investments were being managed by employees in the Stamford, CT office, 30,000 gallons of home heating oil spilled from a burst pipe at a neighboring building. Within minutes, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and city agencies ordered an emergency evacuation of nearby businesses. Allianz staff were required to leave the office immediately, with no additional information about when they would be permitted to report back to work.

SEAMLESS COMMUNICATION KEEPS BUSINESS ON TRACK

The Allianz Emergency Management Committee, which includes senior regional leaders, was assembled using AlertFind emergency notifications. They organized a conference call that same evening where they discussed business and safety issues related to the oil leak. They also created contingency plans in the event that the office might not be cleared for occupancy for several days.

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FRANK GAROFALO,
ALLIANZ VICE PRESIDENT

Later that evening, the committee used AlertFind to send emergency notifications to the 190 employees affiliated with the affected office. Employees were asked to check email or voicemail the next morning for further updates, and were informed not to report to the office until told to do so.

CALL CENTER RELOCATED

At 6:00 am Tuesday morning, with no firm timeline as to when the office would reopen, the committee reassigned call center staff to the nearby New York office. The management team was able to forward support calls to the alternate office, but needed to ensure the staff could be there to manage the phones.

“With uncertainty about the office reopening and being safe for employees to occupy, we didn’t want to take any chances of not having our main (800) phone number staffed that day,” said Allianz Vice President Frank Garofalo. “With AlertFind, we were able to quickly notify the key employees and to ensure they received notice early that morning to report to the New York office. Thanks to AlertFind, the employees received the message and were on duty in the New York office with no disruption to our clients.”

OFFICE CLOSURE CONTINUES AS STAFF RECEIVES UPDATES

The early morning decision to relocate the call center was a good one, as workers were not permitted to return to the building that day. According to Garofalo, “Officials told us they expected to give us clearance by the next day. So we again used AlertFind to notify our 190 staffers and let them know the office was closed for the day, but that we expected a delayed opening the following day. The employees were again advised to check email and voicemail for more updates,” said Garofalo.

“We were very pleased to be able to send out a final message stating that the office was officially cleared and reopened at 8:55 am on Wednesday,” explained Garofalo. “Using AlertFind made the entire process easy, and our management team felt secure in the knowledge that our employees were well informed throughout the emergency. It was valuable to have so many options of how to best reach each employee – any time, anywhere, via any device – with an important confirmation function so that we would know the information had actually been received and read.”

OLD CALL TREES GIVE WAY TO AUTOMATION

Prior to deploying AlertFind, Allianz’s emergency procedures relied on each department notifying employees using call trees. “This manual notification method was slow, time-consuming and not always accurate,” said Garofalo. “Often the department heads would have to call human resources to ask for phone numbers, and there were few, if any, alternative methods to reach people. Meanwhile, senior employees were tied-up making phone calls when they could have been used in more critical functions.”

ALERTFIND READY FOR ACTION AND EMBEDDED IN IT

“After testing AlertFind only a few times, the oil leak allowed us to give it a thorough real-world test. And it passed with flying colors,” said Garofalo. “We are currently using AlertFind on a regular basis as an embedded tool in our IT incident management team to notify impacted employees of IT issues in a timely manner.”

“We chose AlertFind because of its ease-of-use and deployment, and also the impressive caliber of their service and technical support team,” said Garofalo. “We also found the synchronization with our PeopleSoft system to be a huge plus for ensuring easy and regular updates to employee data. Finally, AlertFind is probably one of the best values an IT director can find today – a fraction of what we would have expected to pay to cover 1,600 employees nationwide.”

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