

Southern Company relies on AlertFind to keep the lights on in a crisis

As a leading provider of electricity, Southern Company depends on each and every employee to ensure its customers have power. In order to service its 9 million customers and bring the power back up quickly, regardless of the circumstances, Southern Company needs to be able to communicate with and collect information from employees during any emergency. By leveraging a two-way emergency notification solution, Southern Company can immediately determine and execute the plan of action needed to restore power, while making sure each employee is accounted for and safe.

THE CHALLENGE

Southern Company needed a robust crisis communications system, centralized on a single enterprise-wide 800 number.

THE RESULTS:

AlertFind allows inbound and outbound communication with Southern Company's 28,000+ employees. Now, they can immediately respond to a wide variety of crisis, maintaining and protecting business continuity while ensuring employee safety.

"We have always had an excellent track record in restoring power to customers after an incident, but we found that our challenge was to be as good at communicating with employees in any situation as we were at restoring electric service," says Michele Guido, a business assurance principal with Southern Company and a Certified Business Continuity Professional (CBCP).

TAKING BUSINESS ASSURANCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Like many companies, after 9/11, Southern Company wanted to develop a more comprehensive business assurance model focused on protecting physical and cyber assets. Following Hurricanes Ivan (2004) and Katrina (2005), the company recognized the need to improve continuity and response planning throughout corporate operations.

The benefits of being able to communicate with employees any time and on any device ensures that Southern Company can make big strides on its plan for total business assurance. "The business assurance program is a system-wide effort for protection, preparation and response to incidents impacting the business infrastructure, anything related to our people, critical processes, and property," says Guido. "Southern Company must be prepared to respond to any number of events that truly run the gamut—it could be as serious as a hurricane or a terrorist threat or as mundane as a water main break outside one of our buildings."



With more than 9 million customers, 44,000 megawatts of generating capacity, and 1,500 billion cubic feet of combined natural gas consumption and throughput, Atlanta-based Southern Company (NYSE:SO) is America's premier energy company serving the Southeast.

"We had 800 numbers for employees to call and find out where to report for storm duty. But we wanted to add a solution to enable us to check-in with employees and make sure they were okay."

MICHELE GUIDO,
SOUTHERN COMPANY

ALERTFIND STANDS OUT IN THE CROWD

With input from every division of every operating company, the business assurance department created a comprehensive RFP for a powerful, automated solution that would provide complete crisis communication and collaboration.

Southern Company began to evaluate different crisis communication solutions, including AlertFind. They quickly found that AlertFind was the only solution that met every RFP requirement. Built from the ground up with the security and scalability required to serve global organizations, AlertFind lets companies quickly and reliably distribute and collect critical information in real-time using all available communication channels.

Southern Company asked vendors about their system-wide capability to match its very specific requests. “Several vendors dropped out of the process because they didn’t feel like they could deliver what we needed,” says Guido. “AlertFind continued to step up and deliver everything we wanted with one comprehensive solution,” says Diane Harris, a business assurance principal with Southern Company. “Their willingness and continued commitment to meeting our needs really made the difference.”

As the selection process progressed, Southern Company continued to refine its needs and crisis communication goals, which included inbound/outbound communication and reporting capabilities. They need to be able to send emergency alerts and critical information, let employees quickly report if they were okay, enable supervisors to report absenteeism, and send data to specific teams of employees. Most importantly, Southern Company needed to centralize these communications on one toll-free number that would serve every employee at each of the different operating companies and subsidiaries. As a result, AlertFind allows Southern Company to communicate with all employees seamlessly, while giving each of the operating companies the flexibility to use AlertFind in the most effective way possible. In addition, Southern Company can also immediately activate the management level “Incident Response Teams,” as well as its internal first responder emergency response teams which were a critical consideration in selecting new technology.

“We wanted a solution that would let us use one global number, which we could then transfer to individual operating companies,” says Harris. Citing strict regulatory requirements for certain subsidiaries, she explained that the chosen solution would have to have extensive reporting criteria as well.

“Ignite came to the table and listened to us throughout the entire process,” adds Guido. “We wanted a solution that was both versatile and customizable, and Ignite proved that they could and would deliver. We became a team instantly.”

ONE SOLUTION. MULTI-LEVEL RESPONSE.

“AlertFind is simple, easy to use, cost-effective, and reliable,” says Guido. “For us to deliver one enterprise solution—with a single phone number—throughout our distinct operating companies, is huge.” Centralizing crisis communications with AlertFind also provides cost efficiency not available with previous disparate solutions, she explains.

“With AlertFind, we have revolutionized our employee safety communication,” says Harris. “To say we can have direct, two-way communication with all 28,000 employees or with specific teams within two minutes is phenomenal. Now when the power goes dark, we can immediately make sure employees are safe and quickly swing into action.”

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