

## MissionMode Assists City of Mandeville in Recovery and Relief Efforts

### Background

After the storm passed, communication lines were crippled, practically paralyzing response and relief efforts throughout southern Louisiana.

### Challenge

Systems that had been put in place specifically to execute emergency response plans were soon found to be difficult to use and inflexible. EOC staff and dispatchers resorted to keeping track of residents and recovery efforts on paper with little or no information from the field.

### Solution

MissionMode Solutions set up a new alert notification and crisis management system to open up lines of communication and collaboration among city, state and federal agencies and facilitate relief efforts for residents.

### Results

Officials gained access to the information they needed from the field to make informed decisions about dispatching resources from relief teams including police, fire, the American Red Cross and FEMA.

### Background

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, many communication systems were wiped out—leaving residents with no way to reach emergency personnel. The Mandeville Police Department in the City of Mandeville, Louisiana, lost all vital communication with the City Hall and St. Tammany Parish Emergency Operations Center.

Conditions were deplorable. Areas had no running water, no food and no electricity in stifling heat. Most lines of communication were down including telephone lines, Internet and even cellular phones. Furthermore, it was difficult for emergency personnel to navigate the area, having lost so many landmarks that made the area recognizable. Bridges and roads were washed away.



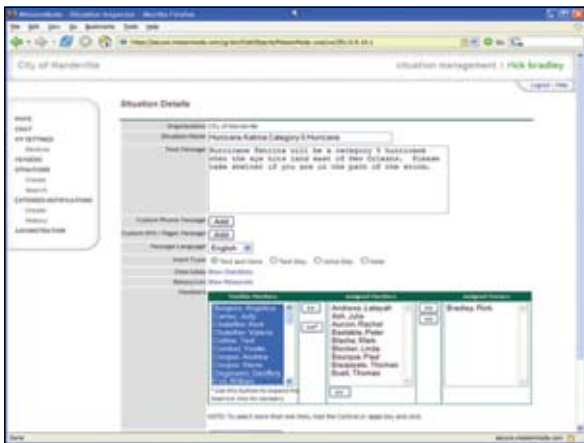
## Challenge

In Mandeville, the situation was bedlam. Many police officers had lost their homes and were living in the station. Ninety-five percent of the police station cell phones weren't working. With phone systems only operating sporadically after the storm, the police chief needed a way to alert officers and dispatchers of changes as new emergency details arose. Like many parishes in Louisiana, the City of Mandeville had an alert notification system and detailed crisis communications plans in place. However, with limited staff, they quickly found many of their existing systems were cumbersome and inflexible and couldn't be tailored to meet their needs without continuous technical support.

EOC staff and dispatchers resorted to keeping track of residents and recovery efforts on paper with little or no information from the field. The only details they knew about the situation on the street were from what they could see on CNN.

## Solution

Like many, those at MissionMode Solutions were stunned by the devastation unfolding and wanted to make a difference. The company offered the use of MissionMode to facilitate the communication and collaboration efforts among city, state and federal agencies.



MissionMode had a new system configured for Mandeville within hours. The team gathered and input data about the city's police officers, agents, dispatchers and existing system devices beforehand to alleviate any unnecessary ramp up time when they arrived on the scene. The first task upon arrival in Mandeville was to re-establish communication in the area.

MissionMode worked with the City of Mandeville, St. Tammany Parish, the American Red Cross and FEMA to re-establish critical emergency communication systems among residents, city officials and neighboring parishes.

MissionMode is much more than just a mass notification system, however. It is a crisis communication platform allowing response team members to log on to a secure virtual emergency operations center (VEOC). Here they can assign, update and monitor tasks; access critical documents such standard operating procedures (SOPs), evacuation plans and protocols; and post any gathered intelligence to a running log ensuring every team member has the most up to date information.

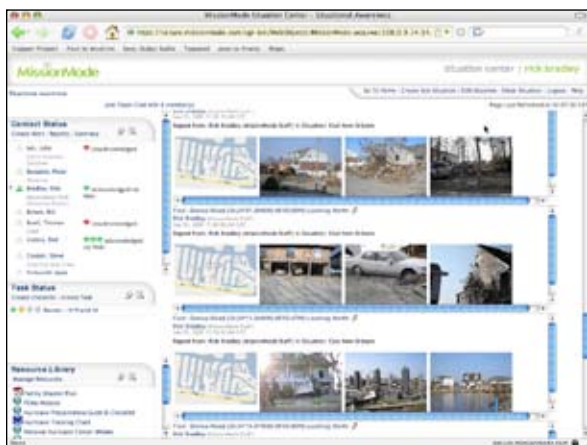
The system previously in place was a locally installed application meaning that all data was stored on-site. Thus, if the infrastructure was lost or destroyed, there would be no way to access historical and current data or send alerts. Meanwhile, MissionMode is accessed over the Web and is extremely easy to use for non-technical users. Alerts can be pre-defined and loaded into the system based on crisis management plans and sent within seconds to a variety of devices including phone, fax, e-mail, SMS and pager. Alerts can also be developed on the fly with a few clicks of the mouse.

## Results

Staff had brought along ten laptops equipped with Sprint EV-DO wireless cards, which they used to get Internet access running at the police station within an hour of arrival. With the new communication line up and running, officials were able to immediately access the MissionMode Web-based EOC, giving Mandeville Mayor Edward "Eddie" J. Price III and the police department the ability to get up to the minute updates from field personnel. This enabled them to monitor the situation around the city and stay informed on the latest efforts of recovery teams.



MissionMode was also beneficial for facilitating health and welfare checks on local residents. Before MissionMode was deployed, dispatchers fielding calls from people requesting that someone check on their loved ones in the area were dispatching response teams to the same location multiple times. With MissionMode in place, dispatchers had the ability to cross check calls and immediately inform the caller if their family member had already been checked on. This gave callers immediate peace of mind and eliminated duplicate efforts for a response team already pushed to the limit.



MissionMode staff drove around the area, capturing more than 50,000 photos of infrastructure and property damage street by street, uploading these images remotely from a laptop directly to MissionMode. By sharing these images along with grid coordinates and area notes, public officials gained the firsthand knowledge they needed to make informed decisions about dispatching resources from relief teams including police, fire, the American Red Cross and FEMA.

Police officers in the field were also able to log onto MissionMode via their laptops and log information in the virtual EOC to inform City Hall as to where and what residents needed help and supplies the most. From there, the American Red Cross was able to distribute care packages containing water, tarps, ice, food and clothing.

Emergency officials were also able to update personal contact information instantly within the MissionMode system. Where they were located and what communication device was easiest to contact them at was kept up to date, in an ever-changing situation. The MissionMode system also allowed area residents to input their contact devices (pager, cellular phone, SMS or relatives' home phone numbers) so they could receive alerts on recovery efforts in their area.

## Other MissionMode Customers

So many MissionMode customers did amazing things, rising to respond to this awful event. Best Buy, The Gap, Target and Wells-Fargo are among the leaders on the private side, both caring for their own employees as well as reaching out to people hit by the storm and the aftermath. These are shining examples of how government and the private sector can work together effectively to save lives and bring the community together under dire circumstances.



The hospitals of the Minnesota Metro Hospital Compact, a MissionMode customer, deal with life-and-death crisis every day. The compact is formed of 29 hospitals in the Twin Cities area that work together to staff off-site care facilities, evacuate hospitals (in case of an emergency), share staff and supplies, perform necessary drills and hold ongoing planning meetings. In the days after Hurricane Katrina, they joined forces to respond to a request from the National Guard to coordinate the recruitment of over 100 volunteer doctors and nurses to staff a medic relief operation to be set up at Camp Ripley, in Little Falls, MN. Using MissionMode they were able to send out alerts and within 24 hours had all 100 ready to be deployed.

University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview, coordinated care for transplant patients evacuated from hospitals in the southeast to hospitals in Minnesota. They had to coordinate volunteers, equipment, supplies and facilities in an uncertain and disorganized national response. Using its virtual command center within MissionMode, they rapidly planned and communicated efforts, adapting plan changes intended to first ship 200 volunteer doctors to Louisiana, then to Houston, then to Camp Ripley and then back to Houston—all in a week's time. Since all the doctors were volunteers with their own full-time jobs, it was imperative that they communicate frequently and clearly to keep the hospitals running smoothly in their absence.



# Hurricane Katrina - Case Study

## Conclusion

Hurricane Katrina proved how easy MissionMode was to implement and use in multiple situations. Mayor Price, emergency response teams, and law enforcement are still using MissionMode to improve daily communications and to be better prepared for any future disaster.

The Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts taught everyone involved a great deal about preparing and practicing for the worst and the importance of communication. MissionMode's staff would be happy to share what it has learned with other public safety agencies and relief organizations looking to enhance disaster recovery plans. For more information please call us at 877-833-7763 or visit [www.missionmode.com](http://www.missionmode.com).



# MissionMode

Phone +1 612.822.4800 | Toll Free US +1 877.833.7763 | International +44 1494 837198 | [www.missionmode.com](http://www.missionmode.com)

MissionMode is a technology services company dedicated to streamlining urgent communications and facilitating team collaboration in a secure hosted environment. Their services reduce the time between knowing about a mission critical issue and doing something about it. MissionMode, which is a privately held company based in Winston-Salem, NC, USA with offices in strategic locations in the USA and Europe, focuses on the Global 5000, government agencies and other high-growth middle market firms. For more information, visit [www.missionmode.com](http://www.missionmode.com)