

Contact: Jean Heller
The Visions Group
727.424.4349
jean@TheVisionsGroup.net

For Immediate Release

Text-Messaging Technology Leader, Agile Communications Group, Warns Against Hasty Decisions on Emergency T-M Systems

TAMPA – Following the April 16 shooting tragedy at Virginia Tech University, colleges, universities and other public institutions have rushed to sign up for new emergency text-messaging services. Nobody wants to be caught unprepared in the next crisis. But choosing the wrong service could provide a false sense of security if the system doesn't work effectively when the need is most critical.

“Despite the urgency everyone feels, they shouldn't rush into these agreements,” said Rick Bowen, director of business development for Agile Communications Group, a technology leader in text-messaging systems. “Many systems are one-way, unable to self-populate, unable to validate databases or confirm delivery. And they use public communications gateways that may close anytime without warning.”

Moreover, Bowen added, billing is fixed on a per-month basis. So the institutions pay for the services even if they aren't activated, rather than paying per use.

“Even if the decisions makers don't pick us for their text-messaging service, they need to ask key questions that will make their decisions informed decisions,” Bowen said.

Among those key questions:

*** Can the system reach the cell phones of *everyone* who needs to get the message?**

This is important because some services are partnered with only one wireless provider, severely limiting scope of the alert system.

*** Does your system permit two-way communications?**

This allows individual recipients to respond to text-message blasts and describe their situations.

*** Will the system blast unsolicited commercial emails at participants on a daily basis?**

Some systems do, and this can be a deterrent to participation. The unsolicited messages are an annoyance and expensive, and message recipients might become complacent and not react promptly in an emergency.

*** Can the system prioritize email blasts to insure that urgent messages go to the front of the queue for distribution by wireless providers?**

An urgent warning is of no use while it's standing in a digital backup.

*** Is there a limitation on the number of cell phone numbers in a text-messaging system?**
There shouldn't be.

*** How easy is the system to set up and use, and who is responsible for maintenance?**
A system that intimidates authorized users either won't be used or will not be used correctly.

*** What is the history of the company supplying the system?**
You want assurances that the system operates as advertised without technical bugs that could interfere with communications, especially in times of crisis when reliability is essential. Make sure you're getting state-of-the-art technology.

"We certainly understand the urge to get something in place," Bowen said. "But it's worth taking a little extra time to make the first choice the right choice."

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