

## VT LASEC Working Group Meeting, August 23, 2024

Attendance: Eric Forand, Joe Tymecki, Jay Barton, Samuel Dillner, Jay Greene, Xusana Davis, Holly Miranda

- VT Alerts System Overview, Samuel Dillner
  - System is housed within Everbridge, and has 3 components
    - Subscriber base, opt in system for public
    - Wireless emergency alerts; sent by the state. Can send the alert to every cellphone in a geographic vicinity (i.e. amber alerts)
    - Specific messaging from the state
  - For this legislative request, we are focusing on subscriber aspect. FEMA has Everbridge alert templates for English and Spanish. Currently, VT currently has English template, not Spanish. Samuel is going to inquire about getting Spanish after this meeting.
  - Everbridge Translation Capabilities
    - Member Portal: supports google translate, allowing user to see sign in/registration page in their language of choice
    - Alert Scenario: allows sender (state, town) to use google translate to send one message in multiple languages. Everbrite supports 12 of the 14 languages present in VT
    - Alert Templates: allows the sender to prewrite alerts and have them prepared to send. If used for translated messages, we would need a translated template for each alert type and language.
  - Logistical Concerns:
    - Besides automated traffic alerts, the state does not send many alerts. Most alerts are sent by enrolled towns and the national weather service
    - 80 towns are signed up to send alerts; of the 80, only 30 use it on a regular basis
      - Challenge to have the towns opt in
      - A few towns utilize different software to have more control over their messaging (VT Alerts has strict guidelines for use) and/or towns do not know that VT Alerts exists
    - Training: training VT Alert managers (the folks who send the alerts) is challenging. Adding additional steps to send an alert may deter towns from voluntarily using the system. Samuel has 700 people to train.
    - State isn't pushing a lot of alerts out to whole state due to the details that can only be captured by local folks (evacuation procedures, exact road closures, etc.)

- Looked into accuracy of google translate, the accuracy of the translation is better for western European languages versus East Asian and African languages. Google translate does not capture cultural nuances (example: social distancing).
  - o You cannot fix/edit the translation in the VT Alert system.
  - o Thinking of having a disclosure that translation may not be entirely accurate, and have folks reach to XX for translation services. Need to make sure internal processes can follow the requests.
  - o Also could have a link to Bable at the bottom of the alert as well
  - o Other possible translation software:
    - EEG: closed captioning software used by news stations Developed LEXI, a speech to text software that automatically translates any language to another.
    - Focus on regional/local languages needs versus all 14 languages
    - Important to note that VT needs to build up our communication pathways rather than finding a new software, as they cannot totally substitute human translators for all situations. Technology is not going to fix all the communication pinch points.
- What other states are doing
  - o 1/3 of State Emergency Management Agencies use Everbridge
    - Oregon uses premade templates for Spanish and English only
    - NYC has a translation team on 24/7 sending translated alerts in real time
  - o Only agencies using google translate are corporations
- Equitable Outreach - Xusana Davis
  - o Most common translation requests might not be the most common language spoken
  - o Trying to be more proactive and intentional with our outreach plan
    - Thinking about being inclusive; meet people where they are and to talk to them directly about what they need. Keep in mind that its rare that we get it right on the first time. Rely on a good feedback loop.
    - Tiered communication priorities should not be based on language groups, as it can look like some groups are getting preferential treatment. Instead, have it be based on communication types
    - Best practice is to compensate participants for their time.
      - Think food/refreshments, childcare for in person meetings, etc.
  - o Xusana is open to meeting with us again in the near future to work through our outreach strategy.