

August 22, 2015 Reverse 911 Test Frequently Asked Questions

Why was the Reverse 911 Test Conducted?

Testing of public alert and notification systems allow emergency officials to understand system capabilities and identify weakness prior to an emergency taking place where those systems may be needed.

Does the system have configuration options that change how it responds?

The system can be configured in a variety of ways based on the needs of the emergency and the length of the message that needs to be delivered. One configuration option is how the phone calls will be disseminated. The system can be activated to utilize local T1 lines, or when a higher volume of calls are necessary, can be activated through a vendor-hosted mass calling feature.

How was Saturday's test configured?

The Reverse 911 system was scheduled to be activated for the entire Emergency Planning Zone, which stretches from Nipomo Mesa in the south, through Cayucos in the north, and east through San Luis Obispo. Additionally, each of the twelve Protective Action Zones(PAZ) were scheduled to be called individually to acquire data on how long it would take to notify each PAZ during an emergency.

To identify the most effective use of the system, the county chose to activate some PAZs over local T1 lines and others to utilize the vendor-hosted mass calling feature.

What was outcome of test?

The PAZs that were activated over the local T1 lines were successfully completed. Unfortunately many of the PAZs that were activated using the mass calling feature were unable to be completed.

Did officials know there were issues during the test?

The system provides real time feedback once it has been activated to make calls, allowing the county to immediately recognize there were system errors.

Why was the test stopped?

After trouble shooting possible causes during the test, the county decided to conclude the test as the issues could not be identified nor remedied during the time period that would have allowed the test to continue.

What was the issue with the system?

The county is working with the vendor and with Information Technology staff to identify why the system failed to successfully launch calls utilizing the vendor's mass calling feature. The root cause has not been identified yet.

Does the system still work?

The calls launched from the local T1 lines were successful. As the root cause of the failure of the mass calling feature has yet to be identified, that feature will not be relied upon until a solution can be identified.

The Reverse 911 system is just one of the public alert and notification systems available to emergency officials in San Luis Obispo County. Other systems such as the Early Warning System sirens, the Emergency Alert System, Wireless Emergency Alerts, route alerting, and traditional and social media continue to be reliable methods to ensure public alert and notification.

What is next?

The county will continue to follow up to identify the cause of the problems and identify a solution to ensure the system can be effectively used in the future. Should the system not meet the needs of emergency officials, other options will be identified to ensure continued successful alert and notification of the public is possible.

Will another test be scheduled?

No other tests have been scheduled yet. If an additional test is scheduled, the public will be notified in advance.

I live in the Emergency Planning Zone, but I did not receive a call during the test, what should I do?

If you have a landline telephone or a self-registered cellphone or digital device and you did not receive a call on Saturday but have received calls previously from the system, you do not need to do anything.

If you have not previously received a call from the system and would like to verify that you are registered, we can verify for you if you provide us your name, phone number and address.

If you have previously self-registered a cellphone or digital device, you can login to your account at <https://slosheriff.onthealert.com/Account/LogIn> and confirm your information is correct.

Should I still register?

Yes! Reverse 911 has successfully been utilized for numerous emergencies in San Luis Obispo County and officials will continue to utilize it should the need arise.

I have additional questions, who can I call?

Please call the County Office of Emergency Services at (805) 781-5011.