

BOLINAS COMMUNITY PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT

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MEMORANDUM

TO:	BCPUD Board of Directors
FROM:	Georgia Woods (BCPUD General Manager)
RE:	BCPUD using AlertMarin as an Interim Emergency Alert System
TO:	August 17, 2024

Background—a whole town water shut-off that taught us a lesson!

- **The leak and our notifications to users:**
 - On Saturday, July 27th we discovered a leak on the 10” main on Mesa Road (near 160 Mesa); this main effectively serves the entire town!
 - On Sunday, July 28th, BCPUD formulated a plan to fix the leak with the help of an outside Contractor on Monday, July 29th.
 - Our suspicion was that it was a relatively small leak on one of the saddles off the 10” main and would not require a complete shutoff of the entire system.
 - On Sunday, we posted on NextDoor, a “24-hr heads-up notice of a POTENTIAL water shut off”.
 - On Monday, it was discovered that to assess the leak the water needed to be shutoff completely; we again used NextDoor and our Website to alert customers that water would imminently be shutoff to the entire town.
- **The impact of our subpar notification system on users:**
 - The day of the water shutoff, the Office was inundated with calls from customers who had not seen our NextDoor message.
 - The Clinic had to close without warning to patients.
 - Over the next few days, we received calls from customers who were concerned about the “strange” look of their water. We assured them that this was due to air bubbles that had gotten into the system during the shut-off, and that it would take several days for the aeration to work its way through the system.
 - We also received a follow-up complaint from a customer who had not seen the NextDoor message and was concerned that the lack of notice meant that their water heater was malfunctioning/damaged due to air pockets.

- Clearly NextDoor is not the most effective means to maximize our outreach to the entire community!

Immediate “Interim” Plan—BCPUD will be using AlertMarin to alert customers to utility outages:

- At this time BCPUD will be using AlertMarin to notify customers of any planned outages.
- We will be doing a public outreach to get folks signed up for AlertMarin.
- [PLEASE SIGN-UP FOR ALERT MARIN!!!](#)
- **It is important for all users to understand that an emergency water outage can occur at any time without notice!!**
- However, we will do our best to give advanced notice to planned water outages when possible.
- Finally, we know that we have vulnerable friends, neighbors and public agencies (the School, Clinic etc.) that need to be directly contacted in the event of an emergency. Our plan is to work with the Fire Department, as they already have a list of these vulnerable individuals. That way we will have a manageable list of phone contacts we will call in the event of an emergency.

Long-Term Plan—why is using AlertMarin just a “Interim” plan?

- AlertMarin is an alert and warning system that will send digital alerts to cellphones and other digital devices.
- View this [relevant background on AlertMarin](#), as we consider its utility to serve BCPUD’s notification needs.
- AlertMarin is really intended to communicate EMERGENCIES, including “SIGNIFICANT utility outages” and “boil water notices.”
- The water shut off on Monday July 29th, did reach the threshold of “significant.”
- However, we often want to communicate smaller water shutoffs, effecting a small subset of customers, and this may not meet the threshold of “significant.”
- The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) at Marin County will be drafting MOU’s that will provide guidance around how Special Districts and Utility Providers should be using AlertMarin.
- Steven Torrence, the Director of OEM will be visiting the BCPUD in two weeks to discuss the MOU and other emergency related issues.
- My hope is that AlertMarin can serve our long term “urgent” digital notification needs. This will be cheaper and more efficient than paying for and having users sign up for a whole new system.
- However, it is possible that the AlertMarin MOU from OEM will explicitly exclude us from, for example, using the system to notify a small subset of customers of aeration in the system that could potentially damage their personal filtration or water heating equipment—that is likely not meeting the definition of “significant.”

Sign-up for AlertMarin!!

- Residents and visitors should opt in to AlertMarin, regardless of whether BCPUD ends up using AlertMarin as our primary water shutoff notification or not.
- Please visit [Alert Marin | Public Emergency Portal - Marin County](https://emergency.marincounty.org/pages/alertmarin) at <https://emergency.marincounty.org/pages/alertmarin> to sign-up!



OFFICE OF
**EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT**

Sign up to receive emergency alerts.

Emergency officials use the AlertMarin Emergency Notification System to provide you with critical information and potentially life-saving instruction. Those registered will receive the notification if they have been determined to be within the precise geographic area(s) affected. An AlertMarin notification will provide timely, clear, and accurate instruction in the form of a call, text, or email.

Emergency situations may include:

- Flooding, wildfires, and evacuations.
- Shelters, transportation, or supplies.

[Sign-up for AlertMarin](#)

By signing-up for AlertMarin, you automatically create an account. Be sure to take note of the Username and Password you have chosen in the initial sign-up in order to sign-in to your account in the future.

[Sign-in & Manage Account](#)

Use this link if you would like to, update your address, add additional emergency alert locations like, child's school, work and relatives home. In order to Log-in you must have initially signed-up for AlertMarin.

Background on Alert Marin:



What is AlertMarin?

- ❑ An alert and warning system
- ❑ Brand name for a system used by all jurisdictions
- ❑ Text, calls, emails, and IPAWS
- ❑ Send alerts to opt-in users
- ❑ Send alerts via public safety data or cell towers to persons in a geographic area.
- ❑ Can be used for acquiring information (polling)



Nixle (vs. AlertMarin)

- ❑ Nixle is not an alert and warning system
- ❑ Nixle contacts cannot be identified
- ❑ Nixle has a strict character limit
- ❑ Nixle subscriptions are based on zip code
- ❑ Nixle is cannot be geolocated or tailored
- ❑ Nixle cannot make phone calls or send WEA
- ❑ Nixle is limited to the zip codes in your jurisdiction



Capabilities of AlertMarin

- ❑ Geolocated text, emails, and phone calls
- ❑ Calls to businesses and homes
- ❑ Calls and text via public safety database
- ❑ IPAWS Notifications – WEA , EAS, NWEM
- ❑ Send Nixle messages to any zip code within Marin
- ❑ Notifications to internal groups



Limitations of AlertMarin

- ❑ Limitations on use for non-emergent events
- ❑ Only as good as the data provided by community.
- ❑ Adult populations mostly
- ❑ Multilingual messaging (telephonic and text)
- ❑ Character limitations
- ❑ Preference for smart devices
- ❑ Cell phone service



Access to AlertMarin

- ❑ Cities and Towns
- ❑ Special Districts (e.g., Fire, Water, Sanitation, Schools)
- ❑ Federal and State Agencies

Note: Some Special Districts will need additional approvals prior to notifications being sent.



Authorized Requestors

- ❑ Fire Battalion Chiefs and above
- ❑ Police Sergeants and above
- ❑ Public Works field supervisors and above
- ❑ School District Administrators
- ❑ Special District leadership
- ❑ Office of Emergency Management – Duty Officer



AlertMarin Message Types

- ❑ Shelter in Place / Lockdowns
- ❑ Evacuation Warnings and Orders
- ❑ Severe Weather Alerts
- ❑ Emergency Public Information
- ❑ Significant Utility Outages
- ❑ Public Health Notifications
- ❑ Boil Water Notices
- ❑ 911 Outages



After-hours AlertMarin Notifications

- ❑ Must have an imminent threat to life safety
- ❑ After hours = 9pm to 6am
- ❑ Awareness messages will not be sent after-hours
- ❑ Closeout alerts after hours will be limited to text & email.



Requesting an AlertMarin

Exigent / Emergency Occurs

Public Safety or Utility supervisor(s) determines that an imminent or occurring incident will pose a threat to public safety and/or requires the public to take an immediate action.

Incident Commander, Police Field Supervisor, Battalion Chief, Public Works Field Supervisor, or Special District lead confirms the threat, need for an alert, intended audience, and crafts message with the support of OEM.

Request for an AlertMarin is placed by the requesting agency calling the OEM Duty Officer or via Dispatch with all pertinent information.

The OEM Duty Officer reviews messaging type, authorized requestor, and launches messaging. Intended audience receives alert and takes action.

Closing Out an AlertMarin

Exigent / Emergency Concludes

Public Safety or Utility supervisor(s) determines that the imminent or occurring incident has concluded and the public can return to normal activities

Incident Commander, Police Field Supervisor, Battalion Chief, Public Works Field Supervisor, or Special District lead confirms the threat has concluded, intended audience, and crafts message with the support of OEM.

Request for a close-out AlertMarin is placed by the requesting agency calling the OEM Duty Officer or via Dispatch with all pertinent information.

The OEM Duty Officer reviews messaging type, authorized requestor, and launches messaging. Intended audience receives alert and returns to normal.