



How R.D. Scinto Builds Loyalty with Proactive Emergency Communication

CASE STUDY

"We have a very happy tenant base when it comes to emergencies, based on our communications capability with Omnilert."

CLIENT: R.D. Scinto Inc.

LOCATION: Fairfield, CT.

COVERAGE SCOPE: 30+ commercial buildings, 235 commercial tenants, 8,000 employees, and 3 million square feet of office and industrial space.

CHALLENGE: Creating a cell phone-connected emergency notification system that would enable the real estate property management firm to reliably deliver vital information to tenants during any type of natural or man-made emergency.

SOLUTION: Omnilert Notification System

RESULTS: R.D. Scinto completely fulfilled their service commitment to tenants and was universally praised for their helpful and supportive services provided during the hurricanes. With help from Omnilert, R.D. Scinto actually increased customer loyalty and added about 70 new tenants.



R.D. Scinto, a real estate developer, builder and property management company, understands better than most businesses how devastating the impact of a natural disaster can be on businesses and the buildings they occupy. The company manages a \$250 million portfolio, operating more than 30 commercial buildings, serving more than 235 commercial tenants, and maintaining 2.9 million square feet of prime office space in affluent Fairfield County, Connecticut.

Premium service is important to R.D. Scinto's customers and the company maintains a proud commitment to excellence, quality and personal service. When other organizations say no to accommodating a tenant's needs, R.D. Scinto works hard to find a way to say yes – even if Chairman Robert D. Scinto has to personally meet with a tenant to work out a solution.

Given this reputation, it is no surprise that the company strives to take outstanding care of tenants under all conditions – including storms, blackouts, natural disasters and man-made emergencies. Omnilert plays a major role in R.D. Scinto's tenant support strategy.

Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy put both companies' commitment to outstanding service to the test.

PREPARATION AND FORESIGHT

Four years before the unwanted arrival of Hurricane Irene, Dave Thomas, R.D. Scinto's Director of Security and Risk Management, recognized the need for an automated emergency alert system to support its expanding tenant base.

The existing system was growing increasingly burdensome and ineffective. "It was a very rudimentary process," Thomas recalled. "We actually had our security operation calling tenants." And when crises occurred, the sheer volume of in bound calls from anxious tenants overwhelmed the company's phone system.

"We would often get requests to give an update while we were still making the original [notification] phone calls, so the updates just couldn't happen," he explained. "We used to get 50, 60, 70 phone calls in five to ten minutes—it would just flood our lines."

R. D. Scinto also needed a system that could reach tenants with important updates anywhere at any time when emergencies occur. "That could be in the middle of the night, so it becomes difficult trying to reach people," Thomas says. "Then you would get voice mail, which is not a great contact."

While Omnilert can also be used to organize, schedule and send less critical notifications, such as maintenance alerts and routine business messages, R.D. Scinto opted to reserve the system solely for emergency notifications. "We made a conscious decision that we did not want to start using it for other announcements," Thomas explained. "We wanted to keep it strictly for emergency situations."



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Searching for a better alternative, the company soon discovered Omnilert. “There weren’t many systems around at the time,” Thomas noted. “There were a few that I read up on while doing some online research and the name that popped up more often than not was Omnilert.”

Examining Omnilert’s features, including a management dashboard, support for multiple notification recipient groups, and web integration, Thomas quickly decided that the Omnilert platform provided exactly what his company needed. Just a few years later, the biggest emergency R.D. Scinto ever faced would prove that Thomas had made the right choice.

PUT TO THE TEST: HURRICANE IRENE STRIKES

On Sunday, August 28, 2011, the skies darkened and weather forecasts became increasingly ominous. Hurricane Irene, one of the ten most destructive and deadly hurricanes to hit the United States in the last 30 years, swept across the Northeast – including most of R.D. Scinto’s prime property base. Calls streamed in from concerned tenants and the call volume rose steadily as conditions deteriorated. But Dave and his team were ready.

As hurricane force gales and pooling water rendered area roadways unusable and power service began failing at multiple tenant sites, Thomas sprang into action. He quickly reduced the number of incoming calls by using Omnilert to automatically update the tenants who had signed up for the notification program.

“Omnilert had a workout here with Hurricane Irene,” Thomas recounted. At the height of the storm, tenants unable to conduct ordinary business operations were desperate for information on when power and other basic services would be restored. “It’s about 300 tenants, all Class A office space, which accounts for about 6,000 to 8,000 employees. We lost power in 12 office building properties in Fairfield County.”

Unfortunately in October 2012 Hurricane Sandy exceeded Irene’s wrath. With damage estimates topping \$50 billion dollars, the storm caused road closures and power outages that extended for weeks after the storm. The good news? “Omnilert once again became the mainstay of our emergency communications, allowing us to keep our tenants up to date with the latest information from our contacts at the power companies, and the Emergency Management Centers of the municipalities where our various properties are located.”

Media reports during the storms indicated that power lines in many areas wouldn’t be repaired for several days; in a few places, power wasn’t likely to fully return for several weeks. R.D. Scinto’s customers faced serious business disruptions and depended on their property management team to keep them up to date.

Thomas and his team issued a steady series of notifications and informative updates for concerned tenants throughout the crisis. “Over the course of four days, we sent well over 20 alert updates.”

With Omnilert, Thomas was able to keep company phone lines open to handle specific emergencies as well as to gather critical information to pass along to tenants.

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THE RESULTS: FIRST CLASS SERVICE AND AN UNEXPECTED BONUS

Although many of R.D. Scinto’s customers suffered serious operational and financial hardships during the storms, Thomas was very pleased that his company was able to completely fulfill its service commitment to tenants under some of the worst conditions imaginable. “Our tenants were able to make business continuity decisions based on the timely information we were able to provide.”

The company was universally praised for the helpful and supportive services it provided during the storms. “The tenant feedback, from the small business tenants to our Fortune 100 tenants, has been outstanding,” Thomas explained. “I couldn’t even count the number of tenants who were telling us, after the fact, how great everything was, how much they appreciated the service, and how useful it was—it was a barrage of phone calls across the spectrum of tenants.”

While Thomas always knew that Omnilert was the right choice for R.D. Scinto’s emergency notification system, he’s gratified that Hurricane Irene verified his judgment. “My compliments to Omnilert for what is a terrific product, a key product for our business in an emergency.”

The team also appreciates Omnilert’s nearly effortless operation and rock solid reliability. “It’s just as easy as can be; I have no problems with it—one number, a password, and I’m in.” He adds, “I have not needed one service call. It’s been the perfect emergency communication device for us.”

And the silver lining? The crisis also created an unexpected benefit as word spread about the company’s service during the storm. “We had about 70 additional tenants sign-up during and immediately after the event.”



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