

# CHRISTUS Health:

## Real-time Notification Helps Hospital System Weather Storms



*In 2008 alone, CHRISTUS Health had to prepare for three major hurricanes – Eduardo, Gustav and Ike. Ensuring the safety of staff and patients was accomplished with advanced planning and instant, reliable communication via Send Word Now®.*

### Top Ten Catholic Hospital System in the United States

CHRISTUS Health is among the top ten largest Catholic health systems in the United States. Headquartered in Dallas, CHRISTUS Health has more than 50 hospitals and long-term

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Quality and Risk**

care facilities, 175 clinics and outpatient centers and dozens of other health ministries and ventures in more than 60 cities in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Georgia, Utah and Mexico. The CHRISTUS health system employs more than 33,000 associates, including 8,000 physicians on

facility medical staffs who provide care and support for patients. Ensuring the safety of staff and patients during a crisis is no small undertaking.

“In an emergency, the safety of hospital associates and patients is our primary concern,” said Bill Mundt, Program Manager Quality and Risk. “The ability to send an instant communication to all the contacts we have for an incident is critical.”

Emergencies for hospitals could include severe weather, natural disasters, security threats and bio or chemical hazards. With an active hurricane season in 2008, the threat of hurricanes Eduardo, Gustav and Ike meant that Mundt and the Information Management (IM) Department had to brace hospitals throughout Louisiana and Texas and notify associates on the weekend in affected states as the storms approached.

### Critical Communication

CHRISTUS Health’s IM Department used Send Word Now’s emergency notification system to rapidly communicate emergency plans and send updates on the progression of the storms in the affected areas. “We used the system to notify our IM associates of the situation, and requested volunteers to deploy to various facilities. With the Send Word Now system we were able to send out a request for volunteers and receive responses back.”

Mundt said the IM Department uses Send Word Now’s Alert Service several times a year for emergencies only, ensuring that all messages sent out through the system are taken seriously by the recipients. Additionally, the hospitals conduct mock disasters and regional tests of the system. “We love it, because we know that no matter what people get contacted and we have a way to track it.”

As part of CHRISTUS Health’s implementation of the Send Word Now emergency notification system, alerting groups were established in the system, ensuring messages sent via voice or text message to land lines, cell phones, pagers, pdas and e-mails are delivered to only those groups that would be affected during an emergency – and not the entire health system. CHRISTUS Health’s IM Department has also established alerting protocols outlining the conditions under which a notification can be launched.

### On Call

“We have a great system for real-time severe weather management,” said Mundt. “Hurricane Dean was another scare that prompted a hurricane watch. We have many long-term care facilities in the affected regions and had to be prepared to evacuate patients and staff. We used the system to communicate emergency plans, and met two times a day prior to the hurricane entering our region. Luckily nothing happened, but with Send Word Now we were prepared.”