

## CASE STUDY: Sears Holding Corporation



### How Sears uses Send Word Now's WeatherBlast Features to Protect Employees and Customers

Clint Fransen, Crisis and Emergency Manager at Sears Holdings Corporation, helps to oversee Crisis and Emergency Operations at Sears Holdings' 3,900 retail locations throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. He is responsible for ensuring that the stores, which offer a wide range of home merchandise, apparel and automotive products and services, are kept both safe and secure no matter what happens. Whether the threat is a natural disaster, an on-site shooter, or an approaching tornado, it's Fransen's job to make sure that Sears responds to it as quickly and as effectively as possible.

#### A Tornado Hits Too Close To Home

From his office in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, Clint helps to oversee the preparedness, mitigation, and response to emergency events at all Sears Holdings retail locations. When he and his team first set up their own Send Word Now notification platform, which can send thousands of messages across multiple modalities in just a matter of seconds, they used it primarily for internal communication.

On April 27, 2011, a series of powerful tornadoes struck near a Sears retail location in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. "One of the tornadoes came within just 200 yards of our store," says Fransen. "We realized then that the Send Word Now WeatherBlast system, which automatically sends location-based alerts during weather emergencies, needed to be implemented in all of our stores."

Since then, Sears and Kmart stores across the country have benefited from Send Word Now's automated weather-related alerts. With these timely warnings, managers have been able to protect store property as well as the safety of countless staff members and customers.

#### The System Gets Put To The Test

In late February of 2012, a flurry of tornadoes broke out across the Midwest, affecting over 300 Sears retail locations in the region. Over one

particular 24-hour period, over 800 messages were sent to store managers, letting them know about the potential threats.

One particular Kmart store, located in a rural area of Kentucky, had typically relied on its Sheriff's Department to notify it of incoming tornadoes. On that day, however, a storm knocked out the local telephone system, preventing the usual 911 call from going through. Luckily, the store manager received Send Word Now's WeatherBlast warning that a tornado was forming less than 5 miles away.

After receiving the alert, the manager was able to follow the standard emergency action plan, and moved all customers and employees away from the windows and into the break room at the back of the store. They remained in the safe area for the duration of the warning. Fortunately, there was no damage done to the store, although some buildings in the surrounding area were affected.

#### From Seconds To Minutes

Before adopting Send Word Now, Sears relied on a manual crisis notification process – which was not timely in a crisis situation.

Now, he and his team members know that they can depend on the WeatherBlast system to keep store managers informed of weather-related threats in the area.

“With Send Word Now in place, we can go to bed at night and know that while we are sleeping, we still have a system to monitor the weather and alert stores if need be. And those alerts now go out in a matter of seconds instead of minutes. When we’re talking about an incoming tornado, just a few minutes can save lives.”

### Seamless Integration

“What we also really love about the system is the seamless integration between the WeatherBlast feature and the rest of the Send Word Now notification platform,” explains Fransen. “The ease with which we can import all of our store contact information and make adjustments when necessary is quite remarkable. Send Word Now is much more user-friendly than other systems.”

On top of that, Fransen notes that Send Word Now’s inclusion of both National Weather Service and WeatherBug alerts gives Sears the peace of mind that no major weather event will go unnoticed. “There is a great footprint in terms of what areas Send Word Now can cover with these services and in turn what alerts it can send out to our stores,” he says.

### Why Send Word Now

Since implementing the Send Word Now notification system, Sears has gained greater situational awareness, efficiency, and control over associate and customer safety, notes Fransen. “The service has helped us in countless ways,” he says. “On top of that, its reliable – we have never had any downtime issues, and it has not hindered our ability to get information out to our stores when it counts.”

Lastly, he adds, in addition to its great service and features, “Send Word Now’s customer service has been excellent. The company has been very responsive to all of our feedback. Whenever we make suggestions or ask questions, we know that the Send Word Now team is on it.”



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**-Clint Fransen**  
*Crisis & Emergency Manager*  
*Sears Holdings Corporation*

### The Send Word Now Advantage

By tailoring its services to the needs of its customers, Send Word Now consistently provides innovative notification solutions that outmatch its competitor’s offerings. Through its BlackBerry, iPhone, and Android integrations,

Conference Bridge functionality, and unique features such as multi-lingual alerts, customers can take advantage of Send Word Now’s customizable platform to maximize their communication efforts. And on top of its robust software features, Send Word Now offers best-in-class customer support services that just can’t be beat.

Send Word Now is the leading provider of on-demand alerting and response services for both routine and emergency communication. The easy-to-use, web-based emergency notification service is used by government agencies, municipalities, universities, non-profit organizations and businesses, including many Fortune 500 companies, to ensure fast, effective, two-way communication in real-time. Send Word Now’s Alert Tracer<sup>®</sup> provides a full audit trail of messages sent and received for after-action reporting and follow-up. Designed to reach anyone, anywhere, anytime, with any device over any type of connection, Send Word Now’s mass notification system is capable of transmitting hundreds of thousands of voice and text messages in minutes.