

Whether you use AlertFirst™ to deliver a message to a small or large group, it is important that the message you send is clear and consistent. The clarity and content of your message are essential in helping your contacts to make the proper response.

Make sure your message:

- States who is relaying the message, what recipients should follow the message's recommendation, why they should do so, what they need to do and when they should do it.
- Is clear, specific, accurate, certain and consistent.
- Speaks directly to the action to be taken.
- Is simply worded. Jargon and acronyms should be avoided.
- Is clearly understandable by a diverse audience, as words can be interpreted differently.

Make sure your message includes elements such as:

- Who the message is from.
- Date/time the message is being sent.
- Type of message. It could be an announcement, a reminder, a warning, etc.
- Urgency of the event/alert. Let your recipients know if they need to take immediate action, soon, or in the near future.
- If an emergency message, include ways recipients can obtain more information. For example, direct the recipients to a web site, television statement or information line. Or, tell them to watch for additional updates to be sent from this messaging system.
- If a non-emergency message, include contact information such as a phone number or email address.
- End the message by saying thank you.

Tips on recording voice messages:

- Write your message ahead of time. Having it in front of you will reduce mistakes, pauses, hesitation, etc. This will increase the likelihood of your message being recorded correctly the first time.
- Ask someone to review the message to see if it makes sense to them.
- When speaking phone numbers, street addresses, or website addresses, be sure to allow an extra length of pause or slower speech. Then, repeat them.
- Don't say the letter "O" if you mean the number zero.
- Record your message in a quiet area. Re-record the message if you made mistakes or said "um".
- Always listen to your message before you send it.

Best Practices for Message Script Design - Continued

Tips for creating text-to-speech messages:

- Use a comma to add a pause.
- Enter phone numbers in the following format: 800-555-5555.
- Spell out all abbreviations such as “Drive”, “Avenue”, “Street”, etc.
- Spell out all acronyms. Type “Police Department”, not “PD”.
- Do not use commas when typing number amounts.
- Type the date and/or time in the following formats: mm/dd/yyyy, hh.mm, AM/PM.
- Enter currency in the following format: \$555.55.
- Type a website address as: “w w w dot example dot com”.
- Always listen to your message before you send it.

Tips on creating text messages:

- Be concise, you are limited to 140 characters.

General considerations:

- Make non-emergency outbound calls between 10am and 7pm.
- If you send a message about an upcoming event, send a follow-up message as a reminder.
- If you sent an emergency message, let people know when the emergency is over by sending them a call, e.g. lost person found, boil alert is over, etc.
- Avoid leaving multiple answering machine/voicemail messages.
- Keep test messages sent to the general public at a minimum.