

USER PROFILE



INDUSTRY

Retail



ABOUT WALGREENS

As America's largest drugstore chain, Walgreens operates 8,240 drugstores with a presence in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



HIGHLIGHTS

Rapid notification enabled Walgreens to protect lives after the Ferguson, Missouri shooting and during the November 2014 protests of the Wilson-Brown verdict

Immediate alerts to 200 team members maximized the amount of time for them to close stores and leave the area safely

One Walgreens store was vandalized, but no employees were injured

Instant Alerts Protected Lives in Ferguson, Missouri

With xMatters, Walgreens Notified 200 Employees Immediately

At Walgreens, business continuity isn't just about the bottom line. Millions of people trust Walgreens stores for timely fulfillment of their medications, as well as many of their day-to-day health products and other needs. With more than 8,200 stores – one within five miles of 75 percent of Americans – Walgreens is America's largest drugstore chain.

At Walgreens, Richard Dodd coordinates efforts with senior leadership and business leaders to mitigate the effects of any disruptive events and ensure that business operations resume rapidly. While the company hopes to never have to act on contingency plans, at times, its widespread footprint has put its stores in harm's way.

NATO 2012: Manual Alerts

In May 2012, when the NATO summit was held in Chicago, Walgreens was prepared in the event of unrest. When initially peaceful protests did turn violent, the company quickly mobilized to contact store managers. In the end, there were 45 arrests and several Walgreens stores suffered minor property damage. Overall, the company was satisfied with the outcome. However, it recognized an opportunity to improve the speed and efficiency of its communications.

"Emergency contact to store managers and key support staff was a manual process," recalls Dodd, Director of Business Continuity and Safety at Walgreens. "It required large numbers of people working through a time-consuming procedure to contact each store individually, and the process had to be repeated for each subsequent notification or message."

Following the summit, Dodd and others set out to automate notification to ensure a swifter, safer response.

Following the Ferguson verdict, we quickly notified stores in the highest-risk zones to cease operations and close for the evening, and notified other stores in the area to be prepared to evacuate. The ability to expedite notification through xMatters was key to protecting our team members and customers. We were able to complete and verify outgoing communications to over 200 people instantaneously.”

Richard Dodd, Director of Business Continuity and Safety, ▶ Walgreens

Mobilizing Employees in Ferguson, MO

Walgreens deployed xMatters' intelligent cloud platform to automate pinpointing and alerting of individuals and teams to work together to quickly rectify critical business disruptions. “We engaged Accenture for a market evaluation of communications solutions, and they found xMatters to be the leading solution,” Dodd said.

For emergency communications such as the NATO event, the company can immediately contact key employees on their mobile devices and stores with important messages, and receive confirmation that messages were actually delivered.

The automated system proved critical when, in the fall of 2014, Walgreens again faced civil unrest, this time in Ferguson, Missouri when a police officer killed an unarmed teenager. Protestors gathered in the streets and became violent by evening. More than a dozen businesses were looted, including a Walgreens store.

The company took several critical steps to minimize disruption. Walgreens identified two districts as high risk, comprising 10 stores, and then created a series of communications for various possible outcomes: to warn stores of possible disturbances; to notify store employees to be ready to evacuate immediately; and to instruct store employees to shut down stores and close early.

In the following months, as a Grand Jury deliberated over indicting the police officer involved, Walgreens prepared for more community unrest. The management team met daily with the corporate support team and district and store managers in the highest risk areas to ensure plans were clear.

In November, the Grand Jury issued the Wilson-Brown verdict; they decided not to indict the police officer, kicking off more civil unrest. Walgreens assessed the situation and chose to alert stores in targeted areas.

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With staff members acknowledging receipt, the company's 24x7 Security Operations Center reported back that everyone was notified successfully – and not a moment too soon. In the following hours, many properties were destroyed or severely damaged, with one Walgreens store sustaining extensive fire and smoke damage.

As Walgreens began the reconstruction process, the company again turned to xMatters to keep team members informed about progress and other important information related to the recovery.

Expediting Communication

Rapid notification enabled Walgreens to protect lives after the shooting and during the November 2014 protests of the Wilson-Brown verdict. Immediate alerts to 200 district managers minimized the amount of time for them to close stores and leave the area. Without automated notification, alerts would have taken valuable time and required significantly more manpower.

“If we had not notified team members in a timely manner, evacuations would have been delayed by precious minutes,” Dodd says. “Protesters blocked Interstate 44 within minutes of the verdict, potentially cutting off egress routes for many employees and customers. Because of our ability to efficiently communicate with our employees, Walgreens stores were unoccupied during the height of the disturbance, thus none of our team members or customers were injured.”

1-877-xMatters

xMatters Headquarters:
United States: 12647 Alcosta Blvd.,
Suite #425 San Ramon CA 94583 US
p: + 1.877.962.887

International:
+1 925.226.0300 and press 2
US/CAN Toll Free:
+1 877.XMATTRS (962.8877)

EMEA:
+44 (0) 800 652 7711
Australia/APJ:
+61-2-8866-4949