



CUSTOMER STORY

Scioto County

Modernizing Crisis Management and Emergency Notification with OnSolve® CodeRED®

Ohio’s rural Scioto County is home to approximately 80,000 people. Located along the Ohio River, the historically manufacturing-reliant county seat of Portsmouth is working to revitalize their economy. As part of the County’s efforts to modernize, finding an emergency notification solution capable of promptly keeping residents and visitors safe and informed was a top priority.

Challenge

Scioto is primarily a rural county with a varied topography and a deep history going all the way back to the early 1800s. Efforts to modernize and revitalize the county and county seat of Portsmouth are underway and began several years ago with a focus on emergency mass notification. Emergency officials wanted to leverage modern technology to more effectively reach everyone with critical public alerts.

Larry Mullins became the Emergency Management Director of Scioto County at the onset of COVID. It was immediately clear that identifying a reliable emergency notification system to handle all public alerting was a top priority. The county needed a solution with an intuitive user experience, an easy enrollment process for residents, IPAWS and more, all within their limited budget.

Geo-targeted alerts

keep the right people informed to avoid panic

Automated weather warnings

ease burden on emergency management

Easy-to-use IPAWS solution

for convenient alerting



Industry

Local Government

Population

73,346

Location

Southern Ohio, bordering Kentucky and part of Appalachia



Training and support were also a concern because most of the county's officials had never previously used an emergency notification system.

From the very beginning, OnSolve worked with Scioto County Emergency Management to understand their needs. Mullins reflected, "I was impressed with how intuitive CodeRED was compared to the others. The CodeRED team was very professional. They were forthcoming and answered any questions my team and I came up with. We went with OnSolve CodeRED because the demo was so good."

Solution

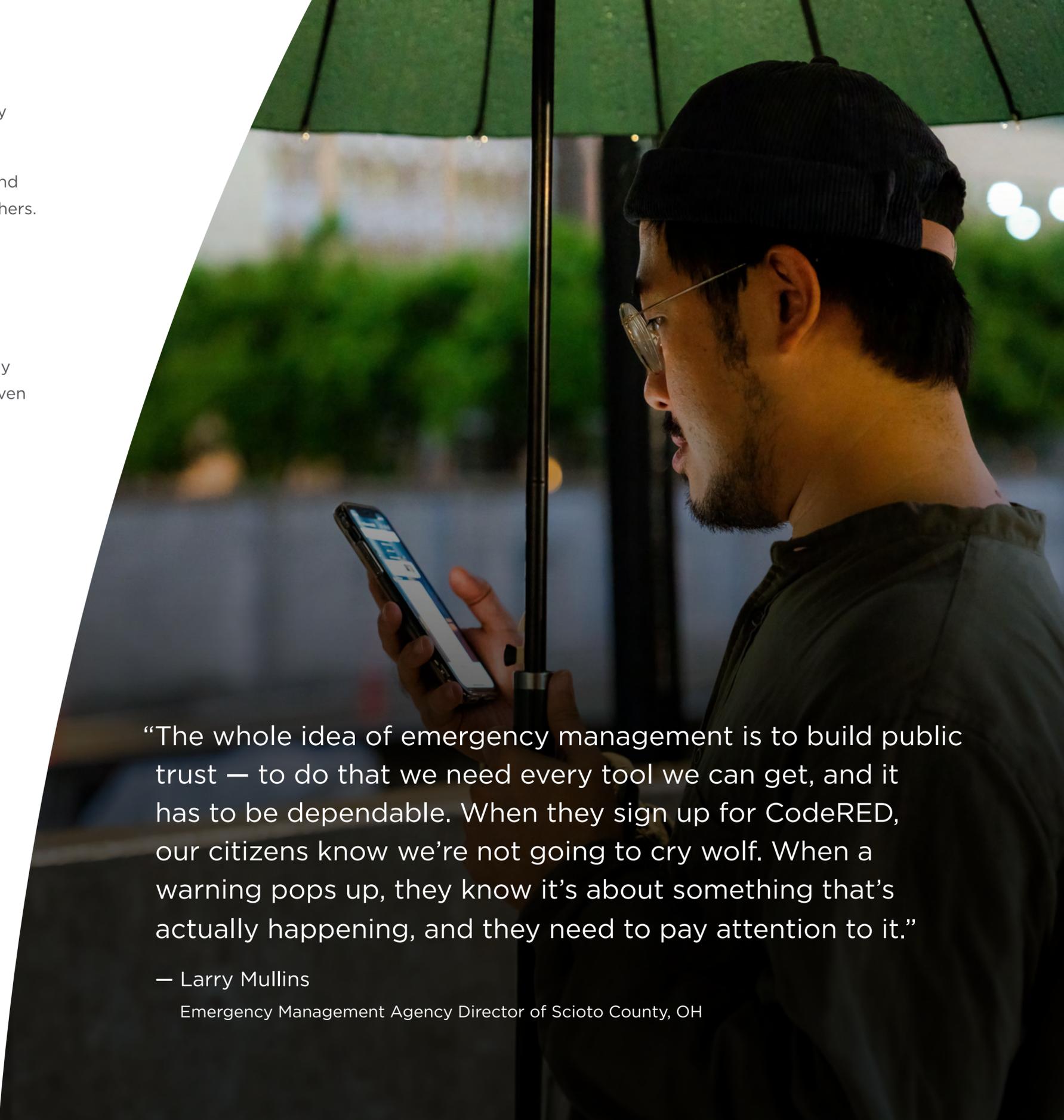
Scioto County implemented CodeRED at the start of the pandemic and has been using it successfully ever since. The ability of the platform to seamlessly integrate with the county's 911 database has proven invaluable. This enabled about 60,000 people to begin receiving alerts without having to sign up or register with the county again. Mullins notes, "Now when we put out an alert, we're reaching every phone that's registered in our 911 zone."

To encourage further enrollment, the free CodeRED marketing materials helped to quickly increase awareness of the system. "We gain more users every time we send an alert for an event. We've built a bridge with the public — CodeRED has really turned things around for us," Mullins said.

The change has been especially effective for weather alerts. Through automation, CodeRED picks up alerts from the National Weather Service and sends them to affected areas of the county, removing the need for alerting officials to go through the process manually.

The county recently became IPAWS certified. Whereas officials in other counties have expressed how hard it is to send IPAWS alerts, the CodeRED IPAWS solution has made it a simple process for Scioto County. By utilizing the test environment in CodeRED, officials are able to increase their comfort level and stay current. And because they've already established trust with the public through CodeRED, they're confident future IPAWS alerts will be heeded.

"CodeRED is a powerful tool," said Mullins. "It's really made my job as emergency manager easier, especially with public warnings and information. Now that we're authorized with IPAWS, CodeRED makes that a breeze to use. I would highly recommend CodeRED for anyone that is looking for a mass emergency notification system."

A man wearing a black cap and glasses is looking at a smartphone. He is standing under a green umbrella. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with some lights.

"The whole idea of emergency management is to build public trust — to do that we need every tool we can get, and it has to be dependable. When they sign up for CodeRED, our citizens know we're not going to cry wolf. When a warning pops up, they know it's about something that's actually happening, and they need to pay attention to it."

— Larry Mullins

Emergency Management Agency Director of Scioto County, OH

Results

Since implementation, CodeRED has delivered on its promises of rapid enrollment, simplified alerting, automation and exceptional customer service. It helps Mullins keep the community safe and informed during severe weather and man-made emergencies.

When two inmates escaped in Scioto County, the geo-targeting capability of CodeRED allowed Mullins to promptly notify residents in the vicinity. This helped to prevent widespread panic across the county, while prompting residents to practice awareness. As a result, many returned to their homes until the threat was resolved. Following recapture, the township trustees thanked Mullins and County Law Enforcement for the prompt use of CodeRED. This outcome was markedly different from a previous incident wherein a resident unknowingly encountered a group of escaped inmates while checking her mailbox at night.

CodeRED was also vital to keeping the public informed during a hazmat situation. Right before rush hour, one of Portsmouth's two primary through-ways was shut down following a tractor trailer accident that resulted in a large fuel spill into a highway storm drain. Traffic was stopped in both directions for several miles. Officials were able to prevent further backup by sending an immediate alert, notifying commuters to use the other available highway.

With CodeRED, Scioto County has established a deeper level of public trust in the emergency management team and the alerting system, enabling the County to keep residents better informed, mitigate dangerous situations and prevent escalating damages. The combination of sophisticated automation with a simple user interface empowers public officials to proactively alert the community to dangerous conditions, while empowering residents to avoid harm's way.

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“Because the warnings are automated in CodeRED it saves us a lot of time. Before, when we would get a warning for a severe thunderstorm or a tornado or flood, it was a big hassle to push out all that information and try to make sure the public was aware. Now CodeRED picks up the feed from the National Weather Service that applies to our county and automatically pushes out the information. That’s a huge lift off my plate.”

— Larry Mullins

Emergency Management Agency Director of Scioto County, OH