



CUSTOMER STORY

Wexford County, Michigan

Advancing Critical Communications for a Safer Community

Wexford County, Michigan, is home to nearly 34,000 residents and a summer travel destination for many visitors. When dealing with severe weather, road closures and other potential incidents, Wexford County needed a way to get emergency alerts out to the community quickly and effectively to reach a population that was initially hesitant of text message alerting.

Challenge

Wexford County's Emergency Management Director, Travis Baker, needed a solution to get information out to residents in real time, before, during and after an emergency or event. Radio, news and tornado sirens were the only way to alert the community to potentially dangerous situations when Baker took over the role in 2019.

Radio and door-to-door communications about severe weather and evacuations have particular limitations, reaching only residents listening to the radio or who happen to be at home. Time-consuming in-person notifications also placed a heavy burden on Baker's staff resources. Baker needed a communications system that could get the word out quicker, to anyone, anywhere. Additionally, Baker knew that critical

Alerts in one click

sent from anywhere, using a mobile app

Communication in seconds

vs. hours with faster, efficient emergency notifications

Improving reach

of communications, replacing outdated tornado sirens



Industry
Government

Population
34,000 residents

Location
Wexford County, MI

information wasn't just limited to tornadoes—events such as road closures and power outages were vital information that the community needed to stay safe and informed. He was looking for an accurate, more seamless way to communicate quickly with residents and visitors, including having visibility into whether the information was received.

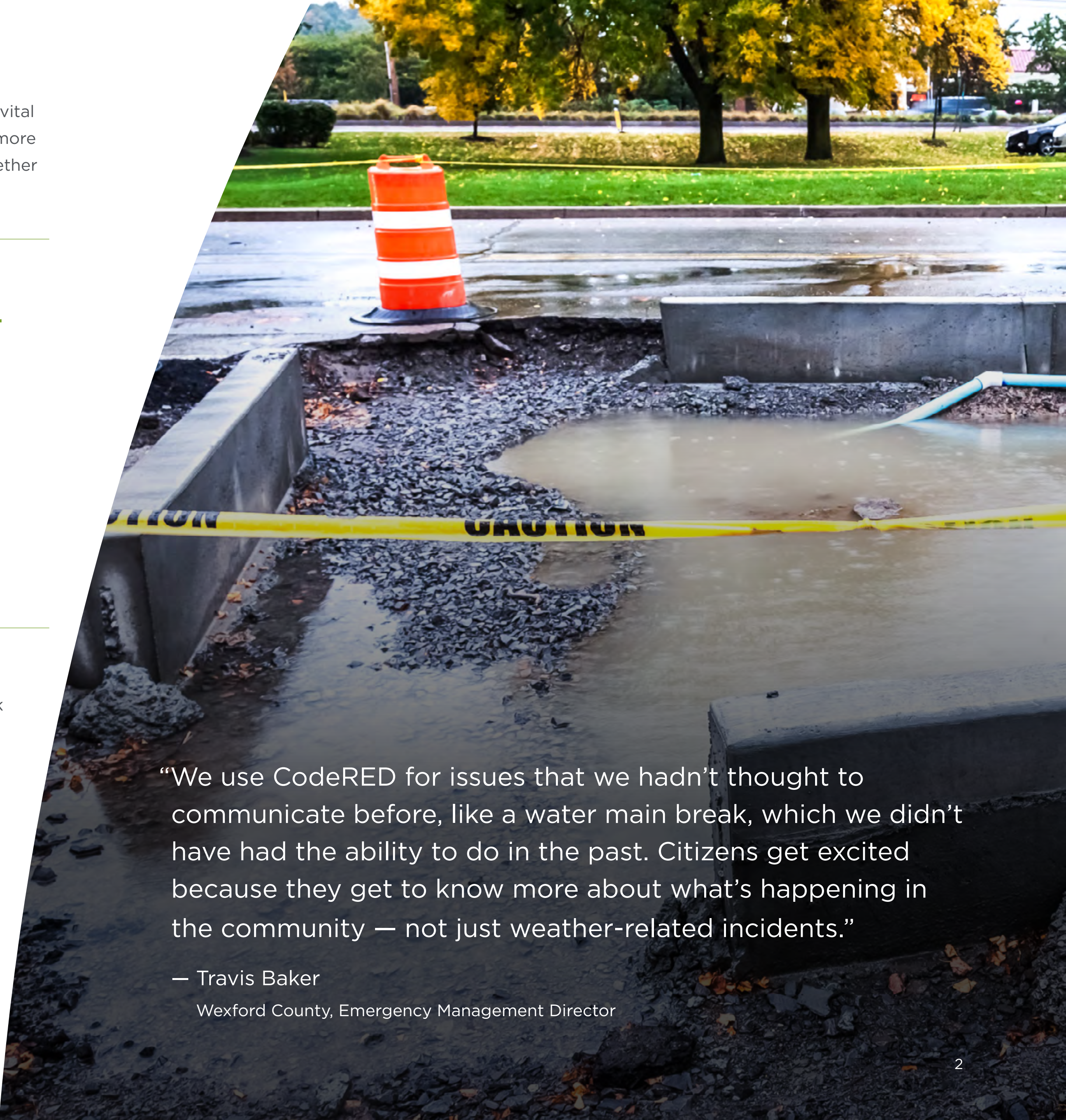
“The feature we’ve benefited from the most is the ability to send alerts from anywhere, even if I just have my phone. Risk doesn’t wait for you to get ready. If I’m on vacation and something urgent happens that needs to be communicated, I can easily grab my phone and quickly send out a communication, knowing the community received it effectively.”

— Travis Baker
Wexford County, Emergency Management Director

Before looking for a solution, Baker created a social media account to alert residents of accidents and power outages but was concerned that the community wasn't seeing his updates. This also took time away from managing other emergencies and mitigating the risks themselves. Finding a solution that allowed him to quickly send a message through multiple modalities, including social media, and have instant visibility into which residents received the message, was critical.

While discussing communication strategies with nearby counties, Baker discovered that many communities were already using an emergency alert system that was easy to implement and use — OnSolve® CodeRED®.

Baker originally began looking for a solution after he was told it would cost thousands of dollars to get the tornado sirens up and running. Since tornado sirens would only reach less than 20% of the population, Baker knew there was a better way to stay in contact with the entire county.



“We use CodeRED for issues that we hadn't thought to communicate before, like a water main break, which we didn't have had the ability to do in the past. Citizens get excited because they get to know more about what's happening in the community — not just weather-related incidents.”

— Travis Baker
Wexford County, Emergency Management Director

Solution

Wexford County chose CodeRED to help them build out their emergency communications strategy. He didn't realize how easy it would be to integrate an alerting system into his community to improve crisis communications beyond just tornado and air raid warnings. With CodeRED, Wexford County was able to expand their community outreach with:

- **Accelerated delivery of alerts to residents**, saving time and valuable manpower by eliminating reliance on door-to-door notifications
- **Precise geo-targeted alerts** to warn individuals in affected areas so they are able to take action and make informed decisions
- **Automated weather alerts** that can be delivered in real-time to the community
- **Confirm communications with residents**, providing residents with the ability to confirm receipt of an alert and for Baker to track the alert's reach

Results

With CodeRED, Wexford County's emergency management team can provide the community with real-time information about critical events that help keep them informed and safe. Travis Baker, Emergency Management Director, highlights other values from the system, including:

- Peace of mind knowing alerts go out quickly and to the entire community
- Flexibility to send an alert from anywhere via a mobile app
- A confident, more informed community
- A sustainable, more mature emergency management program to better manage physical threats and risk complexities
- Newfound trust in his emergency communications strategy
- Ability to audit and improve future crisis response outreach

"The feature we've benefitted from the most is the ability to send an alert from anywhere, even if I just have my phone," explained Baker.

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