



CUSTOMER STORY

# Benton County, Tennessee

Building Community Resilience with OnSolve® CodeRED®

Benton County, Tennessee, is a small rural community of 16,000 located directly between Memphis and Nashville. Away from the metropolitan radar and media coverage, they needed a straightforward system for rapidly alerting residents about incoming severe weather and critical events.

## Challenge

When newly elected Benton County Mayor Brett Lashlee held his first town hall meeting in the small town of Big Sandy, he quickly uncovered a major issue with the town’s remote location. The spotty or delayed coverage for regional weather forecasts and emergency notifications was threatening the safety of the community. In addition:

- Due to the distance of doppler radar installations, the radar could only see at high altitudes and couldn’t accurately see areas far away, such as Benton County.
- A network of volunteers dedicated their time to posting information about severe weather events in the county, but it did not reach the broader populations.
- Media outlets were reliant upon doppler radar systems that were not accurately reflecting what was potentially happening on the ground.

## Lifesaving

multichannel emergency alerts

## Severe weather awareness

boosted by community involvement

## Partnership

with CodeRED experts



### Industry

State and Local Government

### Population

16,000 residents

### Location

Benton County, TN





The community had limited experience using digital solutions for severe weather reporting. Mayor Lashlee knew the community needed an easy-to-use, multichannel system that could distribute urgent information to a population with limited digital proficiency. In a county dependent upon grant funding, he also needed a solution that would meet multiple needs and prove a worthwhile investment.

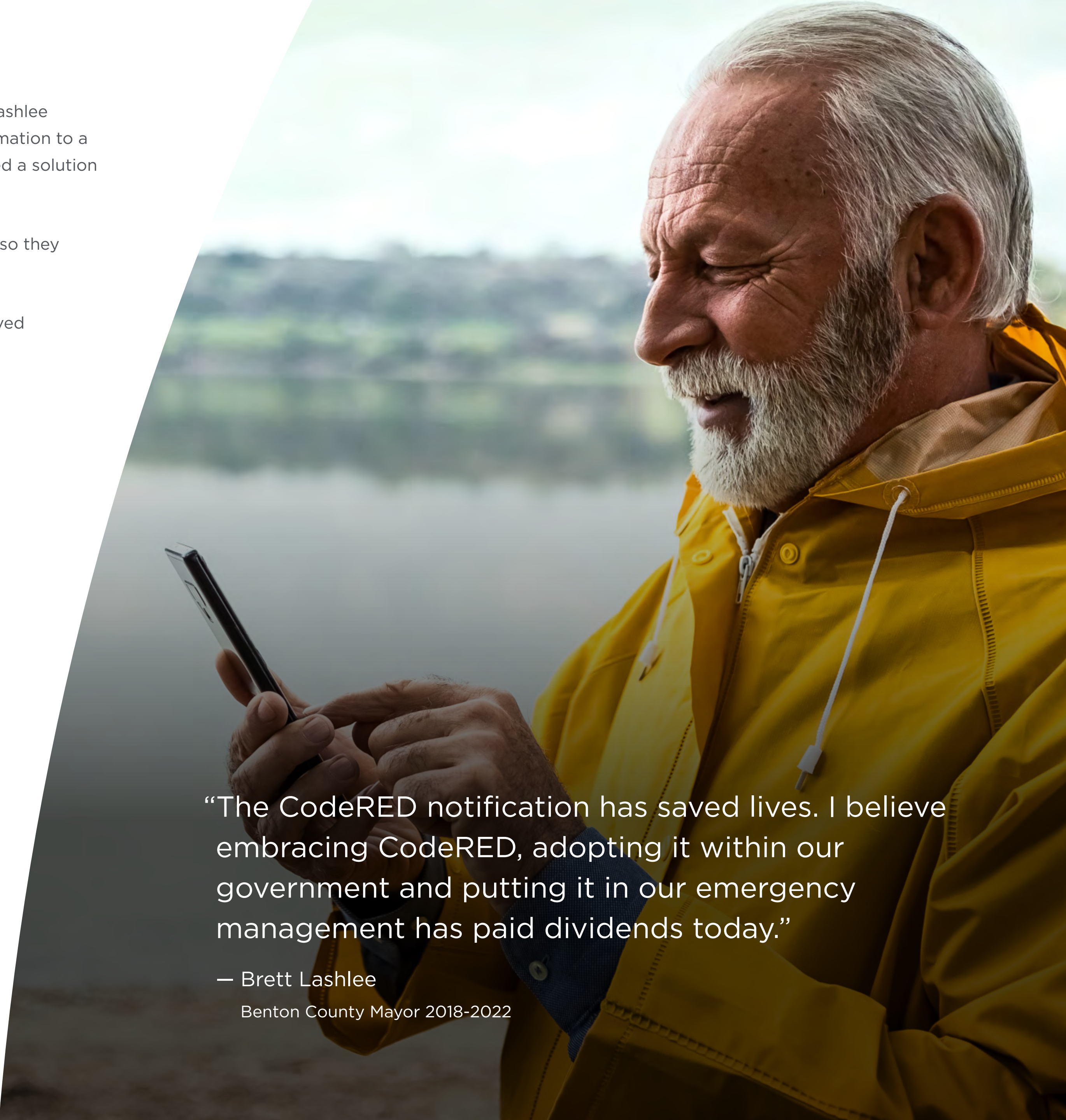
“We needed community partners — utilities or school systems, cities — involved from the beginning so they would see the value in this solution,” said Mayor Lashlee.

Even though other county officials were historically hesitant to embrace digital technology, he believed it would transform their notification system. In 2019, he proposed CodeRED to the Benton County government as part of their emergency management.

## Solution

Benton County now relies on CodeRED to deliver important updates to residents about everything from tornadoes to road closures. The multi-modal alert system is easy to use and reaches even the most rural areas to ensure their safety and awareness of critical events. As an integral part of their emergency response, CodeRED brings Benton County:

- **Timely delivery of critical alerts.** No more late notifications. Now, the county can send alerts to residents as soon as they’re aware of an emergency and follow up after the event.
- **A key element to being StormReady®.** Since implementing CodeRED as their emergency alert system, Benton County has been recognized as [StormReady](#) by the National Weather Service.
- **A versatile tool made more effective by the community.** Community volunteers can report weather events to the National Weather Service prompting them to send CodeRED alerts, in addition to those automatically triggered by regional radar. For even more coverage, local emergency officials can send customized messages directly from the interface.
- **Not just a piece of software, but a partnership with experts.** OnSolve guided Mayor Lashlee through the process of implementing CodeRED and prepared Benton County employees with personalized training.



“The CodeRED notification has saved lives. I believe embracing CodeRED, adopting it within our government and putting it in our emergency management has paid dividends today.”

— Brett Lashlee

Benton County Mayor 2018-2022



## Results

Thanks to CodeRED and the dedicated community of Weather Spotters, Benton County is now:

- **A community that is always informed of potential threats:** CodeRED closed the “weather awareness” gap in a rural area. County officials use CodeRED to create custom alerts for a variety of events, including road closures and construction, as well as tornadoes, floods, heavy rains, high winds, or icy conditions.
- **Equipped with a solution that fuels community resilience:** Mayor Lashlee found the key to creating a culture of resilience was implementing a solution that the entire community could use to stay informed, including local volunteers who are vital to helping a less digitally savvy community maintain higher levels of awareness about critical events.

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“OnSolve’s guidance throughout this whole process has been critical and pivotal to my comfort in what we were doing. I’m sold on CodeRED and OnSolve. Having that relationship is huge for me to do what needs to get done and grow with it.”

— Brett Lashlee

Benton County Mayor 2018-2022

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### CodeRED saves lives during severe tornado in 2020

In March 2020, a volunteer recognized the incoming danger and notified the National Weather Service in Memphis, which triggered a CodeRED alert. Residents received emergency notifications and were able to seek cover with minutes to spare before the tornado hit.

One family recounted receiving an urgent CodeRED alert on their phones and rushing to take shelter in their laundry room. Just five minutes later, the rest of their house was destroyed by the tornado, but they escaped unharmed. They credit CodeRED with saving their lives.

Several homes were ruined and one life was lost in the tornado, but experts believe the damage would have been much worse without the quick action of the Weather Spotter and subsequent CodeRED alert.

“We have to count our blessings that lives were saved simply because of the CodeRED notifications that were going off,” said Lashlee. “The impact and value of CodeRED was front and center the whole way.”

