

PageOne statement

The unfortunate events in London on 7th July 2005 demonstrated the importance of effective communications in responding to and managing major incidents and the increasing role that mobile messaging plays in emergency and business continuity plans.

Throughout the events of the 7th July and the subsequent days, PageOne services played a part in the operational communications of many organisations directly involved in responding to these events. Over this period PageOne distributed nearly a quarter of a million messages.

NHS trusts, emergency services, London Underground and the rail companies all used PageOne's paging and SMS messaging capabilities to ensure a coordinated and informed response to the incidents. In addition hundreds of corporate businesses used PageOne as part of their own incident and business continuity and thousands of businesses across London were kept informed through the City of London Bombwatch scheme, operated by PageOne.

Whilst events demonstrated the growing role and acceptance of text messaging for critical messaging, it also reinforced the role paging still has to play in communicating vital information quickly. Paging's inherent broadcast capability and protection from public peak traffic loads during such emergencies, ensures that even though the paging network experienced record traffic levels on 7/7, messaging was well within capacity, and the delivery of critical messages in a timely manner was unaffected. This mirrors the findings of several reports into communications during the 9/11 disaster in New York, which highlighted the critical role paging played.

Michael Cassidy, president of the London Chamber of Commerce, reinforced this point in an article in the Times soon after the July 7th attacks in London, Cassidy commented "firms needed to be able to communicate through a secure paging system in the event of further attacks"

SMS and paging together; a resilient communications method

Of course, paging forms only part of a wider communications plan. SMS text messaging is playing an increasing role within business. Businesses have realised that a resilient communication strategy, uses a combination of technologies such as paging and SMS. As a disaster will inevitably exploit weaknesses in any communications strategy, which is over reliant on a single network or technology - landlines can be damaged, mobile networks can be overloaded.

It is crucial that businesses ensure that they have effective plans for managing and responding to emergency, disaster or even system failure. Many organisations are indeed currently reviewing their communication plans. Here's how our clients benefited from an integrated communications plan:

How messaging was used:

It was clearly vital for key organisations including the emergency services, London Underground, the hospitals and the rail companies to keep employees informed and to issue instructions.

PageOne's Connect users include the North East London Strategic Health Authority, responsible for seven Primary Care Trusts, five Acute Hospital Trusts and Health Emergency Planning advisors.

Senior Manager Emergency Preparedness Chris Drew commented "The system was effective on July 7 at a time when both cellular and land-line phones were unavailable. We were also able to use the system to cascade short 'headline' briefings to organisations throughout the day. In all, a very effective and useful system."

Business Continuity

PageOne is a member of 'Survive – The Business Continuity Group', the leading forum for expertise and information exchange among Business Continuity professionals.

Survive's Chief Executive Officer Lorraine Lane told InTouch: "The events of 7 and 21 July in London resulted in many companies dealing first hand with a situation that had often been discussed, but which we all hoped would never happen."

"Those companies that already had Business Continuity (BC) and crisis management response plans in place, found their preparedness really paid off. Since the July attacks we have spoken with many of our member companies who were very happy with the way their plans were carried out. They were able to effectively assess the situation, consider the potential risks, and respond appropriately to minimise damage."

"The possibility that further attacks may occur is now a serious possibility, and therefore companies need to continue to improve their levels of preparedness. The City of London Police and British Transport Police have both warned businesses across the UK to have BC plans in place. "

About PageOne

PageOne has been in data messaging for the past 20 years supplying paging and SMS services to both public and private sectors who demand extreme levels of resilience and reliability. PageOne focuses on helping businesses make the most of messaging, and our commitment to investment and innovation enables us to offer powerful levels of network capability to a broad customer base.

Our customer's include the emergency services, the NHS and MOD, Network Rail, Train Operating companies, Transport for London and London Underground as well as many major corporate customer who require critical messaging services.