



**ABOUT OCEAN CITY**

Ocean City, Md., is a popular residential and vacation community located on Maryland’s Atlantic coast, as well as on a barrier island near the Isle of Wight and Assawoman Bays. The community encompasses more than 10 miles of beach area close to the Delaware state line.

*“When we went through Hurricane Irene, the town was heavily criticized for lack of communications, even though we were pushing out communications through many channels. Still, our residents and property owners didn’t get the information they needed. With GovDelivery, after Hurricane Sandy, we saw very little criticism of our communications. Honestly, we felt people were thrilled with the communications after the storm, which was a huge win for us in gaining back the trust of our stakeholders.”*

- Jessica Waters, Communications Manager, Ocean City, MD

## Ocean City Uses Digital Communications Platform to Keep Residents Safe

### Situation

During the 2011 hurricane season, the Town of Ocean City witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of Hurricane Irene as it traveled up the Eastern seaboard. Ultimately, the storm caused 47 deaths in the U.S. and more than \$15 billion in damage.

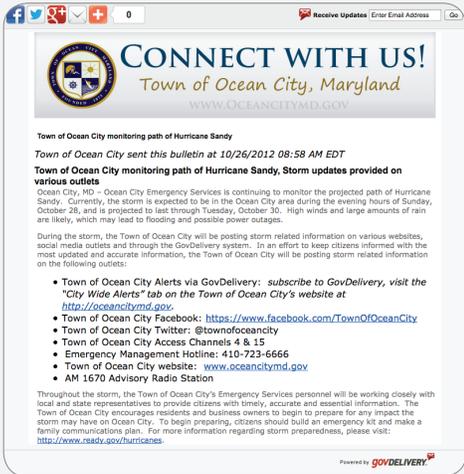
In the aftermath, residents of the area complained that they had not received adequate and timely information from local officials about the storm. As a result, administrators for Ocean City began to discuss the need to implement a better communication system that would give officials a more efficient and effective way to disseminate storm-related information to residents prior to, during and after a similar situation.

While the town did have a communication system in place that allowed them to push out email alerts to residents, administrators wanted more flexibility, including the ability to **send text alerts whenever the need arose, especially in critical and urgent situations.**

### Solution

Ocean City selected and implemented the GovDelivery Digital Communication Management (DCM) solution in July 2012.

GovDelivery DCM, designed specifically for the public sector, offers powerful multichannel communications capabilities, such as email and text messaging. Residents can sign up for specific topics that they want to receive information on, such as Jobs, Council Video Updates, Programs & Camps, and City Wide Alerts. In total, Ocean City offers 19 different topics, with several topics connected to their website to provide **automatic updates to interested stakeholders.** This means that when Ocean City web administrators change information on a web page, GovDelivery DCM notices the change and creates a bulletin noting the updated website content. Ocean City administrators then have the option to manually send that message, or they can set up the system to send out the message automatically. In addition, the system allows Ocean City to ask subscribers questions that can be used to segment messages to specific audiences based on where they live or their zip code. This is especially important with regard to **emergency communications.**



*"In times of emergencies, it's critical for the town to have a system in place that allows us to quickly reach out to our residents and stakeholders with information that they need to keep themselves and their properties safe or secure. With Hurricane Sandy, I was glad to know that we were using the same system that FEMA was using to get the word out about the storm."*

- Joe Theobald, Emergency Services Director, Ocean City, MD

During late August and September, coinciding with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Preparedness Month, Ocean City began a public awareness campaign for the new service. In that campaign, Ocean City encouraged residents to sign up to **receive emergency weather and other alerts** before the 2012 hurricane season really started picking up steam.

In late October 2012, as weather forecasters recognized the potential of what would become Hurricane Sandy, Ocean City **proactively pushed out information to its residents**, warning them about the storm's potential. It also offered citizens recommendations and advice about preparing for landfall, and urged residents to visit the town's sign-up page to subscribe to receive additional information via email and text message.

The town also requested that all media outlets in the area subscribe for the service to receive **up-to-the-minute alerts about local conditions**. In the two days prior to landfall, the town sent 16 press releases that encouraged residents to sign up for the City Wide Alerts topic to receive information via email or text message to keep up-to-date on Hurricane Sandy related news.

## Results

As a result of its proactive efforts and by leveraging GovDelivery DCM, in just two short months, Ocean City accumulated **more than 6,000 subscribers to receive emergency email alerts and text messages from the town**. More than 4,000 of those subscribers signed up during the last-minute push in October prior to Hurricane Sandy making landfall. This allowed officials to improve information delivery to residents significantly and allowed administrators to continue communicating both before and after the storm hit.

For many residents of the East Coast, the widespread devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy came as a shock, but residents of Ocean City were extremely satisfied with officials' communication outreach in their area. The hurricane would go on to wreak havoc throughout the Mid-Atlantic and became the largest such storm ever recorded in the area, and the second most expensive in terms of damage, behind only Hurricane Katrina.

In total, Ocean City now has more than 97,000 subscribers across 19 public-facing topics.