**Useful Practices for HOA Alert Systems**

The NEPCO General Membership meeting held May 14, 2016, included a forum of selected HOAs to share information through discussion of their HOA alert system. Eight members were asked to provide a description of their HOA alert system and present the pros and cons of their current process. Provided below is a summary of their presentations followed by the four most common areas discussed. This is an extract from the minutes of the meeting.

<u>Sun Hills Association, Bill Eckert:</u> In addition to his presentation, Bill provided the following written summary for the minutes. Sun Hills is 148 five-acre lots for single-family homes only. Everything in Sun Hills is voluntary, including annual dues that are required only if you want to vote in the annual election. Voluntary participation in our email alert system is initiated by asking the Board to add you to the email chain, or by putting your email address on your election ballot. Our president implements alerts. They're infrequent, and only for neighborhood-interest items, such as bear in someone's yard, lost pet, announcement of annual picnic & election, neighbor willing to mow lots or remove snow, or local meeting about a land-use issue affecting the neighborhood. What we like about this system: simple, voluntary, no-cost, rapid-reaction for folks who check their email regularly. What we don't like: everybody has a different idea of what's appropriate (of course).

<u>Gleneagle North HOA, Joy Garscadden:</u> Joy stated that Gleneagle North consists of about 480 single family homes. She said that she runs the alert system and only emergency items are sent out through it. It is a voluntary email blast and about 33% of the HOA residents are signed up. What she likes about the system is that it is free. What she doesn't like about it is that the email server has a limit on the number of recipient addresses in the email blast. She likes the idea of getting new people to sign up for the alerts at the annual HOA meeting.

<u>Timberview 1 POA, Dave Reed:</u> In addition to his presentation, Dave provided the following written notes for the minutes.
- 38 single family homes
- Use Management Company (MC) for informal alert system.
    --Anyone can contact MC to provide inputs
    --MC will contact HOA board to determine need to alert unless it is an immediate, time-sensitive emergency in which case they will send it out.
    --MC generally alerts people via email; in event of a critical emergency, can use phone.
- Pros:
    --Doesn't require separate alert roster—eliminates privacy issues.
    --Works well for major issues like fire evacuations
    --Works OK for smaller issues such as animals in neighborhood—dependent on people checking their email.
- Cons:
    --Would not work as well for a critical, immediate type of situation such as a tornado

<u>Arrowwood Improvement Association, Craig Rhodine:</u> In addition to his presentation, Craig provided the following written summary for the minutes. Arrowwood Improvement Association includes 145 2.5 acre and above lots with single family homes. Our Neighborhood Watch (NW)

effort typically includes 2 leaders, 1 of whom is a Board member, and a network of volunteers each representing up to 10 neighbors who work at the direction of the leaders to disseminate information to the neighborhood.  Our NW leaders interact with and collect information from multiple community resources including NEPCO meetings and updates, community Fire Wise events, El Paso County engagement opportunities, El Paso County Sheriff's office newsletters and inputs from Arrowwood community members.   We like the fact our system promotes interaction within community – both external and internal to Arrowwood and would like to see increased communication and coordination with neighboring HOAs.

Canterbury Improvement Association, Chris Davis: Chris stated that Canterbury consists of 134 residences.  They use an email blast for alerts and the participation is entirely voluntary.  Chris stated that the participation rate is about 90%.  He said the drawback to this is that the residences need to check their email regularly.  Chris said that his HOA is transitioning because they have no internet access at their location.  They have developed a private system which includes the alert system, reverse phone calls and text message access.  The HOA is thinking of getting a game-camera to post at the entrance of the development to record the comings and goings.

Promontory Pointe HOA, Ann-Marie Jojola:  In addition to her presentation, Ann-Marie provided the following written summary for the minutes.  Promontory Pointe will have 260 single family homes when our development is complete. Right now we have 66 households involved in Neighborhood Watch (NW). Email is our primary means of communicating and more neighbors are also signing up on Nextdoor.com. Pro's--we reach everyone signed up with NW, we have a friendly neighborhood. Con's--email is not timely and is dependent on when neighbors check it. Our HOA Manager would also send out alert type messages but not all neighbors are signed up through the HOA site. Between the HOA and NW we would hope to double tap as many as possible vice neighbors not seeing an alert message at all.  Promontory Pointe and Arrowwood will be meeting soon to coordinate.

Woodmoor Improvement Association, Kevin Nielsen:  Kevin is Woodmoor Public Safety and, in addition to his presentation, provided the following written notes for the minutes.
- Woodmoor consists of appx. 3000 lots, 90% of which is single family homes.
- Woodmoor primarily uses email blasts and our website as the primary form contact.  We also use Nextdoor and Facebook
- People can sign up for reverse 911 by registering your phones at: elpasoteller911.org
- Woodmoor Public Safety (WPS) currently has 2 game cameras and have them placed watching or suspects in mail theft.  We also encourage residents to notify WPS if they have video cameras so we can review footage if other problems may be caught on camera.

Fox Pines HOA, Greg Lynd: Greg said that his HOA uses a program called VoloVillage.com. It is cloud-based and costs money to use.  To use it you just need access to a smart phone and the alert is almost instantaneous.  You need an administrator assigned within the HOA to run it.  It costs $2.50 per household per year for unlimited use.  A negative is that each HOA household has to go on-line to sign up and fill out information fields.

After the eight HOA presentations, Greg led a discussion on pros and cons searching for "best practices".  Four items that seemed to be the subject of most of the discussion were:
- Email blasts are quick and easy BUT the residents need to look at their email regularly to be an effective alert system.
- If you have a voluntary email blast alert system, then using the HOA's annual meeting to talk about the alert system and get people to SIGN UP is a good thing.
- The use of game cameras that are motion activated, or a type of Go-Pro camera, seem to be an effective and efficient alert technique for some HOAs.
- Homes with outdoor video cameras can be used, with permission, to identify vandals etc.