



LODGE SUCCESS TEAM

Suggestions for Urgent Notifications

“For every minute spent organizing, an hour is earned.” -- Benjamin Franklin

Most lodges recognize that their ability to attract members to their events, training, and practices is dependent upon (a) having them planned in advance and (b) making sure that they are communicated to the membership, so members know about events and can include them in their schedules. But, what happens when an urgent situation or emergency occurs? What are some strategies for letting people know about unplanned events?

Unplanned or emergency events can include:

- Meeting or degree changes
- Meeting or degree cancellations
- Distressed brothers or their families
- Widows in distress
- The passing of a brother or his loved one, with details about a funeral or memorial service

The time to plan for urgent notifications is before you need to invoke a plan. How might your lodge handle these situations?

Most often, we’ve found that communications to members involves the Secretary or the Worshipful Master. But any officer or even a designated member could organize and handle message distribution.

Some lodges use a tried-and-true method of a **phone tree**. “Setting up a solid phone tree takes time, but many people feel that it is well worth the effort, since the list can be used again and again.

One easy way to visualize a phone tree is as a phone pyramid. One person at the top of the pyramid calls two or more people, who each call two or more people, and so on, until every person on the list has been called. This allows people to distribute information quickly, without placing the burden of work on one person.”¹

Other lodges use **e-mail distribution lists** for communication. The only downfall to e-mail alone: e-mails might or might not be opened in time to do any good for the member.

Many lodges are active users of **Facebook and Facebook Messenger**. Both work well, if your members follow your Facebook page, or subscribe to them and actively monitor the applications -- particularly if they are avid users of their Smartphones. Pinterest, Snapchat and Instagram are effective social media applications, but less likely to be utilized by older members.

Another approach is through **group texting and phone applications**, like Slack.com (<https://slack.com/>), DialMyCalls (<https://www.dialmycalls.com/>), Text-em-all (<https://www.text-em-all.com/>). Others include applications like WhatsApp or Telegram, in which you can develop group chats.

My church uses PhoneVite to notify members with important messages, in addition to e-mail distribution from the church secretary. That way, all members receive both e-mail messages (if they have an e-mail address) and a phone call or message. We are considering adding texting to those members who have cell phones with texting capability.

Two bits of serious advice on communication:

1. **Don't limit yourself to one form**, because everyone in your lodge communicates differently and depends on a certain form of communication. Diversifying your communication strategies allows you to reach more people, particularly important in emergent situations.
2. **You cannot over-communicate**. Even if a member receives an important message from more than one person or through more than one method, very few will consider them wasted efforts. Your members will likely be grateful that your lodge took the time and trouble to keep them in the loop on important events or situations.

There was a time when the preferred form of communication was a trestleboard. Trestleboards are fine when everyone receives them through electronic or postal means and in time for the event(s) being communicated. But, trestleboards won't help very much in urgent situations. At that point, we need to get the maximum information in the hands of the most brothers we can, so they can attend or act to help someone. In this day and age, more than one form of communication is essential.



Would you like to discuss ideas for communication with the members of your lodge? We would love to assist in any way that we can. It is why we are here. Please contact Corey Curtiss at ccurtiss@michiganmasons.org or Fred Kaiser at fkaiser@michiganmasons.org. Or give Outreach and Member Care a call at **(800) 321-9357**.

¹McMahon, Mary. "What is a Phone Tree?" at: <https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-phone-tree.htm>.