

# High-Volume Inbound Call Handling – Critical for Communication Success

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White Paper

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## Introduction

When thinking about crisis notification, most people think of outdial phone calls, faxes, paging and e-mails as the best way to contact individuals, organizations or the public in the event of an emergency. Unfortunately that one-dimensional thinking discounts the importance of inbound telecommunication, which not only provides organizations with a responsible and reliable way to inform key audiences in an emergency, but also supports and authenticates the other forms of outreach already in their communications arsenal. Perhaps even more importantly, it allows an organization to continue operations even in the event of a massive inbound assault on their call center.

## Continuity of Operations and Employee Accountability

Contacting first responders, key staff and other agencies is critical in any emergency. However, as recent events have demonstrated, telephone circuits (both land and cellular) are typically overloaded – especially during an emergency’s early stages. Pagers may not work and Internet access may be problematic. Further complicating things is the fact that, because of the emergency, those individuals who need to be contacted may not be at their usual locations (home, office, job site, etc.)

Inbound telecommunication makes *self-service notification* possible. Staff members can call in from any location, enter their employee code, get a work assignment and report to the appropriate location. The data from the call is immediately available to the message initiator, who then knows the employee’s status. Inbound telecommunication also provides staff the ability to call in and get status updates as a situation unfolds.

Inbound telecommunication makes compound notification possible as well. For example, a doctor could be called, told to read a fax or e-mail (perhaps the symptomology of a disease), then call an inbound 800 number to verify receipt of the message. The doctor could then transfer from the inbound call in to a conference bridge with health department officials to discuss the situation. In any case, the results of all communication attempts are immediately available to the message initiator, who is consequently a far more informed and efficient communicator.

## Public Notification

During a crisis, an agency’s inbound telecommunication system can be overwhelmed very quickly with calls from customers or the public. This situation can make carrying on normal operations next to impossible. However, with inbound Virtual Response Unit (VRU) capacity, calls can be transferred to FAQ lines and filtered away from core operations. The ability to protect the technical core is one of the greatest attributes of inbound VRU.

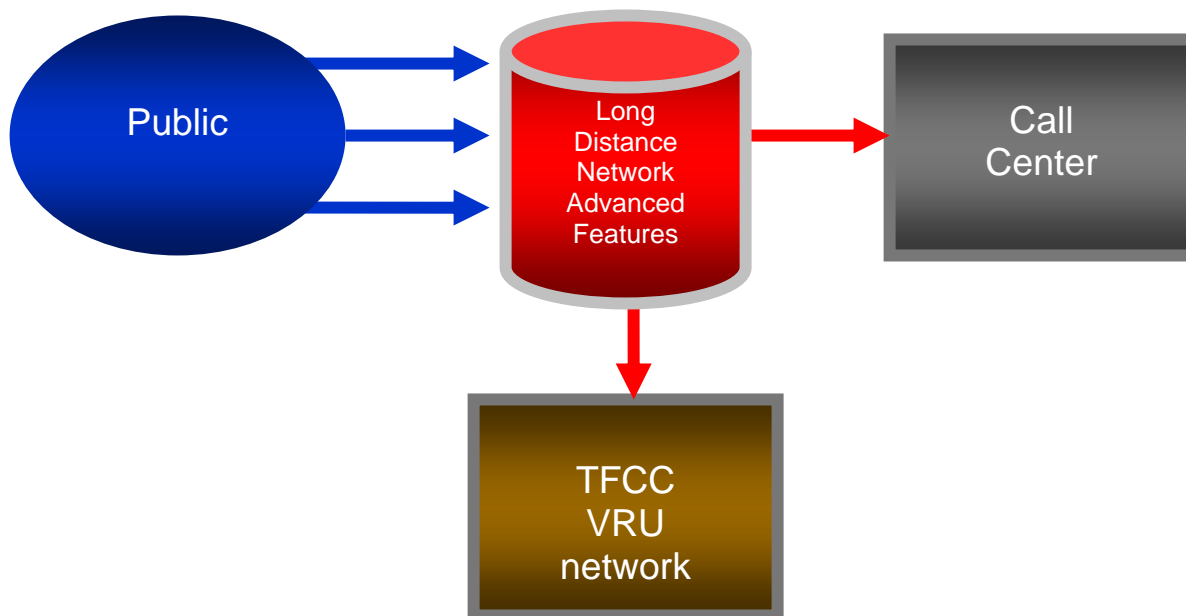
Studies of 9-1-1 centers have shown that *five outdial calls can trigger two to three inbound confirmation calls*. Thus, an outbound “boil water “ alert or evacuation warning can generate a huge volume of inbound traffic to a call center, more than likely disrupting operations and hindering any sort of emergency response efforts. An inbound VRU system, like the one available from Twenty First Century Communications, can take all incoming calls without returning even one busy signal. This is especially important during emergencies when people are more likely to panic if they cannot get information or instructions.

## Uses for inbound VRU

- Information hotlines
- Inbound staff communications
- Employee accountability
- Continuity of operations
- Current situation updates
- Evacuation routes/ instructions
- Product recall alerts
- Media communications
- Support of outdial notifications
- Call filtering and segmentation
- Intelligent agent routing

The inbound capability available with a solution like Twenty First Century's also can be used to transfer the base of operations "on the fly." When the City of Nashville was hit by a tornado that put its municipal building and call center out of commission, the city transferred all calls to Twenty First Century, which delivered a message to those attempting to contact city services (licenses, contracts, etc.) and another to those reporting power outages. Life-threatening emergency calls were redirected to other police stations. The result was a seamless flow of information that took some of the urgency out of the emergency.

Instances like these clearly demonstrate the fundamental necessity of inbound telecommunication, and emphasize the importance of complete two-way crisis communications capabilities. Only experienced communications solutions providers like Twenty First Century can give organizations the high volume inbound call handling capacity they need to be up, running and communicating whenever the need arises.



## A Twenty First Century Solution

The **Universal Communications System** offered by Twenty First Century Communications is a fully hosted Application Service Provider (ASP) solution that can be used to quickly reach any number of individuals or groups. The key applications of the system are mass public alert and mobilization of critical staff such as managers, first responders, and emergency personnel. It can also be used for routine, non-emergency communication.

Twenty First Century offers simultaneous outdial and toll-free inbound calling capability. In fact, TFCC accesses the largest telecommunications platform in North America, with 25,000 outdial and 30,000 inbound ports. Using both inbound and outbound programs, the system can perform a simple broadcast, or it can poll contacts to collect information. It also includes a real-time customizable reporting function which tracks call results in whatever terms are appropriate for the situation.

The system provides targeted messaging with an unlimited number of possible scenarios, messages, recipients, and groups. Also, Geocoded Mapping can be used to designate notification areas on a web-based map. The system will identify the residents and businesses in that area, generate phone numbers, and deliver notifications or instructions. Messages can be pre-recorded for later use, created on the fly, and/or changed as the situation unfolds.

Twenty First Century's systems are accessed through the internet, with 24/7/365 toll-free live technical support. TFCC's automated solutions assist organizations in conserving resources, as these hosted services do not require the purchase of any additional equipment, software, licenses, or phone lines. There is no maintenance on the part of the client nor are there fees for upgrades.

Twenty First Century Communications is a certified vendor of the General Services Administration (GSA) authorized under federal law to provide its services to any governmental agency through recently approved Cooperative Purchasing legislation.

Whatever the likelihood or frequency of natural disasters, the absolute truth is that they will occur. The critical key to response and recovery, from best to worst case scenario, is communication: getting the right information to the right people.

For more information about Twenty First Century Communications and its technologies, please visit: [www.tfcci.com](http://www.tfcci.com).