

Public Private Partnership Case Study:  
Digital Billboards Deliver Emergency Messages

**Summary**

Digital technology enables quick delivery of emergency messages via high-tech billboards. Public-private partnerships harness these high-tech signs to inform the public about weather warnings, evacuation routes, and safety-related information. Partners in this case study are the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) and the Florida Outdoor Advertising Association (FOAA).

**Background**

Florida's 18 million+ residents and visitors face hurricanes and other natural disasters. Innovative emergency managers augmented standard (broadcast) emergency communication by also delivering specific, localized messages to the public via digital billboards.

Digital billboards, operated by the private sector, display static images that do not scroll or flash. Under Florida law, these static images may change every six seconds. In 2008, the state (Florida Division of Emergency Management) created a partnership with the outdoor advertising industry (Florida Outdoor Advertising Association). Digital billboards allow emergency managers to reach motorists at no cost to the public. Emergency officials use high-tech billboards to communicate targeted messages on weather warnings, evacuations, shelter locations, and road detours. Via this partnership, emergency authorities have access to more than 100 digital billboards in Florida. Billboard operators post emergency information on a voluntary basis.

**Goals and Objectives**

The key goals and objectives are to:

- Enhance the State Emergency Response Team's ability to communicate critical information quickly to Floridians during disasters
- Use the latest technology to communicate emergency information to mobile residents and visitors outside the home
- Cultivate public/private partnerships

**Description**

Evacuations and other disaster responses in a state with 18 million+ residents and millions of visitors annually underscore the critical importance of public communication as a key component on emergency preparedness. Coastal areas are the most developed in the nation, comprising 17 percent of the contiguous U.S. land area which is home to more than 53 percent of the nation's population. Coastal population is projected to increase in Florida and nationwide. Florida – with nearly 1,200 miles of coastline – is vulnerable to hurricanes as well as other natural disasters.

Two key factors motivated the outdoor advertising industry (FOAA) to approach state emergency officials (FDEM) in 2008 to suggest a partnership: a series of devastating hurricanes along with the concurrent advance of digital technology that enables quick, computerized change of billboard copy. By 2008, law enforcement was using digital billboards on behalf of public safety, displaying AMBER Alerts to help locate abducted children and posting “wanted” billboards to help apprehend fugitives. The trade association for the outdoor advertising industry in Florida (FOAA) volunteered to post emergency messages on donated digital billboards as a public service.

The industry and the state created an emergency alert template and policies for posting emergency alerts, to assure uniformity. FOAA is a member of the State Emergency Response Team.

### **How the alert program works**

In an emergency, FDEM contacts FOAA to request digital billboard postings and to provide information for the alert such as geographic area and timeframe. FOAA inserts alert message into a pre-approved template. After sign-off by FDEM, the trade association notifies participating member companies in the affected area, or statewide if necessary. Participating billboard companies track display times and locations in order to quantify the scope of the communication. FDEM notifies FOAA to modify or cancel alerts.

This public-private partnership was first activated in August of 2008 due to widespread flooding caused by Tropical Storm Fay:

- 37 different emergency messages displayed on digital billboards in 11 counties
- 10-day activation
- 75+ digital billboards

Since 2008, the emergency alert notification system has been activated four times in Florida, relaying information on flash flood watches and warnings during severe tropical storms. This public-private partnership enables FDEM to ask FOAA member companies to provide general/widespread information to the public, and-or specific disaster-related details such as locations and directions to shelters, evacuation routes prior to hurricanes, and road openings/closings following a severe storm.

This concept – quick display of emergency information on donated digital billboards – is also used elsewhere. For example, 10 digital billboards in Milwaukee, WI, displayed contact information for FEMA after severe flooding in the fall of 2010 (“FLOOD DAMAGE, Register Today, 1-800-621-FEMA”).

### **Role of the Florida Division of Emergency Management**

FDEM is by statute considered a state agency that reports directly to the Governor. The Division’s role is to plan for and respond to natural and man-made disasters. The Division prepares and implements a statewide Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and conducts extensive exercises to test state

and county emergency response capabilities. The Division is the state's liaison with federal and local agencies on emergencies. Division staff members provide technical assistance to local governments as they prepare emergency plans and procedures.

The Division operates a statewide Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Tallahassee, FL. The EOC serves as the communications and command center for reporting emergencies and coordinating state response activities. The center maintains communications with county emergency officials and a broad range of public and private sector entities such as hospitals and homeless shelters. Emergency messages and information are generated from the state's EOC during activation.

### **About the Florida Outdoor Advertising Association**

FOAA works to promote and preserve the business of outdoor advertising with consideration of the public interest and welfare; to provide programs of education, information and research for better understanding and appreciation of the outdoor medium; to cooperate with governing authorities in regulating outdoor advertising within Florida; and to establish and maintain liaison with other professional, governmental, and business organizations. The trade association represents more than 80 percent of the industry in Florida.

FOAA has been a pioneer in public-private partnership. Working with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), FOAA was an original team member in the effort to implement the AMBER Alert system in Florida. Since June of 2008, more than 26 AMBER Alerts have been transmitted to digital billboards in Florida. Other law enforcement partners include the Florida Department of Corrections.

Public service is a long tradition in outdoor advertising. FOAA member companies annually donate hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of advertising space to charity, non-profits, community groups, and to government. Campaigns include public awareness programs for Florida's Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Transportation, Department of Financial Services, and Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

### **Requirements for Success (No word max given for the next sections)**

- Digital billboard inventory (nationally, more than 2,000 digital billboards are operational)
- Willingness of digital billboard operators to donate space for emergency messages, and provide timely postings
- Protocols for uniform operation, such as templates for messages
- Designated staff in government and the private sector to manage the partnership
- Speedy, effective communication between state emergency officials and private

### **Resources**

FOAA has the ability to provide information through its website, and to provide tools and templates to create the alert notification messages on the billboards quickly and easily.

### **Training and Exercises**

FOAA staff conducts workshops and trainings for both members and state emergency management officials on how best to use the alert system and the process for requesting a digital billboard alert.

### **Communication Tools**

FOAA uses the following methods of communication with public/private partners: email alerts; in-person meetings; conferences and other events; member newsletter (3x per year); website; media announcements (news releases and press conferences, as appropriate); public service announcements.

### **Links**

[www.foaa.org](http://www.foaa.org)

[www.floridadisaster.org](http://www.floridadisaster.org)

### **Contact Information**

Charlotte Audie, president and CEO, Florida Outdoor Advertising Association (FOAA)

[Sample documents attached. FOAA Alert Policy; Post-Storm Report; Sample Creatives; Media Advisory; News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 4, 2008

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**FLORIDA'S OUTDOOR ADVERTISERS AND EMERGENCY MANAGERS TO  
USE ELECTRONIC BILLBOARDS TO DELIVER DISASTER INFORMATION**

*~ More than 50 FOAA Digital Billboards Statewide Available to Post Emergency Messages ~*

TALLAHASSEE – Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, State emergency managers and the Florida Outdoor Advertising Association (FOAA) officials today announced a new partnership to use electronic billboards to quickly post disaster information along Florida roadways. Under the partnership, state emergency managers will be able to communicate with Floridians through the FOAA's member network, which operates more than 50 digital billboards across the state. Today's announcement comes as part of the Annual Statewide Hurricane Exercise at the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Tallahassee.

"Florida's Outdoor Advertisers will be providing a vital information resource to Floridians with this network of digital signage," said Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp. "We welcome the FOAA members as part of the State Emergency Response Team, and look forward to building a great partnership that will benefit all Floridians."

Craig Fugate, director of the state Division of Emergency Management, reminded Floridians to prepare for the annual hurricane season that runs from June 1 through November 30, 2008.

"If you call the Sunshine State home, now is the time to get a plan and prepare for the season," said Fugate. "We want to thank our partners from the advertising community who have come to the table to help protect the lives of Floridians."

The FOAA member digital billboards stretch from Pensacola in the Panhandle to Pompano on the Gold Coast. State Emergency Management officials will use the boards to post urgent messages on weather warnings, evacuations, shelter locations, and road detours within approximately four hours of notification about the emergency situation. Amy Bogner, Communications and Public Service Director of the Florida Outdoor Advertising Association, said the FOAA currently provides a similar service to the Department of Law Enforcement to post "Amber Alert" messages.

"We are proud to partner with the state to help our 18 million residents and visitors stay safe during disasters or local emergency events," Bogner said. "Every day thousands of travelers pass by these billboards so they are an excellent tool to help get the urgent word out."

To learn more about the FOAA public service announcement program go to: [www.foaa.org](http://www.foaa.org). To develop your personalized family or business disaster plan, visit: [www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org)

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## Media Advisory

Test Emergency Messages will be shown on Digital Billboard locations on Wednesday, June 4, 2008 from 12 pm to 5 pm Eastern Daylight Time. For Capitol Press Corps: The location at North Monroe Street just north of Bradford Road in Tallahassee will run test messages beginning at 12 pm Eastern Daylight Time for B-Roll and Photo Opportunities.

## FOAA Member Digital Billboard Market Locations

<b>MARKET</b>	<b>LOCATION DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>DAYTONA</b>	W/S Nova Rd., 150 ft. S/O Granada – F/N & F/S (Daytona Beach) - <b>both sides</b>
	W/S U.S.1 (Yonge St.), S/O Hand Ave.-F/N & F/S (Daytona Beach) – <b>both sides</b>
	N/S Mason, east of U.S.1 – F/W (Daytona Beach)
	W/S of Nova Rd. @ Golf Ave. – F/N & F/S (Daytona Beach) – <b>both sides</b>
<b>FT. MYERS</b>	E/S San Carlos Blvd., S/O Summerlin – F/N
	E/S US-41 @ Brown Rd. – F/N
	W/S US-41 @ Beacon Manor Dr. – F/N
	N/S College Parkway, E/O McGregor – F/W
	E/S US-41, S/O Daniels Pkwy. – F/S
<b>FT. WALTON</b>	S/S 98 E/O Mid-Bay Bridge Rd. – F/W (Destin)
	N/S 98, .2 miles W/O Skylark – F/W (Navarre)
	N/S 85 W/O SR 20 – F/W (Niceville)
	N/S John Sims, .1 mile east of Davis Rd. – F/W (Niceville)
	N/S Hwy. 20, E/O Range Rd. – F/W & F/E (Niceville) – <b>both sides</b>
	N/S Racetrack, E/O Mar-Walt Dr. – F/W (Ft. Walton Beach)
	E/S Beal @ Oak – F/S (Ft. Walton Beach)
	W/S Beal @ Green Acres – F/S (Ft. Walton Beach)
	E/S S. FL Ave., S/O School House Rd. (intersection of Fitzgerald and School House) - F/N
	E/S US-98, 500 ft. N/O I-4
S/S SR-540, E/O 540A – F/W	
E/S US-98, N/O 540 – F/S	
<b>OCALA</b>	S/S SR-200, .3 miles E/O I-75 – F/W
	W/S US-441, .6 miles S/O CR-42 – F/N
	17 <sup>th</sup> St., 500 ft. E/O Lake Weir Rd. – F/W & F/E – <b>both sides</b>
<b>ORLANDO</b>	E/S US 17-92, 565 ft., N/O SR-434 – F/S (Longwood)
	S/S SR-408, .6 miles E/O Kirkman Rd.-F/W
	S/S I-4, 110 ft. E/O Fairbanks Ave. -F/W
	S/S I-4, 200 ft. N/O Kennedy Avenue -F/W
<b>PANAMA CITY</b>	E/S US-231, S/O 23 <sup>rd</sup> St. – F/N
	N/S Hwy. 98 @ Thomas Dr. – F/E
	E/S 23 <sup>rd</sup> St. @ Hwy. 98 – F/N & F/S – <b>both sides</b>
	N/S 23 <sup>rd</sup> St., E/O Stanford – F/W & F/E – <b>both sides</b>
<b>PENSACOLA</b>	S/S Alt. 98 @ Middle Beach Rd.
	W/S I-110 @ Blount St.
	N/S US-98 @ Redfish Pt. – F/E
	SWC 9 <sup>th</sup> Ave. @ Creighton – F/N

	W/S US-29 @ Airport Blvd.
	S/S Cervantes E/O Palafox St.
	Chase St. @ Bayfront Dr.
	S/S Sorrento Rd., W/O Blue Angel Pkwy.
	N/S Airport, W/O I-110 – F/E
<b>POM PANO</b>	E/S I-95, 100 ft. S/O Hallandale Blvd. – F/S (Miami/Ft. Lauderdale)
<b>TALLAHASSEE</b>	W/S Thomasville Rd. @ Capitol Circle NE-F/N & F/S (Tallahassee) – <b>both sides</b>
	E/S N. Monroe, 556 ft. N/O Bradford Rd._F/NW & F/SE – <b>both sides</b>
<b>TAMPA/ CLEARWATER</b>	S/S 751 Brandon Blvd., .3 miles W/O King Avenue – F/W
	W/S 9204 Veterans Exp, 1.8 miles N/O Courtney Campbell Causeway – F/N
	S/S 762 Ulmerton Rd., 350 ft. E/O 49 <sup>th</sup> St.-F/W
	W/S 369 Dale Mabry Hwy., 200 ft. S/O Waters – F/S
	W/S U.S.19, 275 ft., S/O 150 <sup>th</sup> Ave. N.-F/N
	N/S Tyrone Blvd., 600 ft., E/O Park St. – F/W
	W/S US-19, 25 ft., N/O Alderman Rd.-F/N
	W/S of I-75, 0.5 miles N/O SR-60 – F/N (Brandon, FL)
	N/S of Hillsborough Ave., .60 miles E/O Race Track Rd. – F/W
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52 DIGITAL BILLBOARDS (61 Faces)</b>



## STATEWIDE EMERGENCY ALERT POLICY FOR DIGITAL BILLBOARDS

As part of a joint partnership between FOAA and the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), member companies will now have an opportunity to serve an important public interest by providing crucial emergency alert information via donated space on digital billboards. This statewide partnership will provide an additional resource to the state's emergency operations plan and allow them to allocate all available resources more effectively when providing relevant information to the state's residents and visitors (not everyone is a citizen).

Florida has a multitude of hazards which could cause potential disaster situations, from hurricanes and wildfires to terrorist attacks and infectious diseases. When any such disaster is imminent or occurs, it is imperative to relay timely, accurate and helpful information to the general public. For example, FDEM may ask members to provide locations and directions to shelters or list evacuation routes prior to a hurricane strike or road openings/closings following a storm. The information will be targeted to the individual digital billboard and area in which it is located, unless a general message is preferred to cover a more widespread area.

Public safety in Florida is a shared concern of everyone and FOAA members can play a major role in helping the general public receive vital information before or after any type of disaster. All FOAA member companies with digital billboard inventory are encouraged to participate.

### **Emergency Alert Activations:**

**ACTIVATION REQUEST** – A FDEM representative will liaison directly with FOAA to request member assistance for digital billboard postings. The FDEM will include all digital billboard locations as part of their Geographic Information Systems mapping software to pinpoint the exact location(s) suitable for a specific disaster-related emergency alert request.

After a request is received from the FDEM, FOAA will then notify the designated statewide digital market coordinator from each participating member company. The coordinator will be provided with the digital billboards targeted for the request. Multiple companies may be asked to participate based on information received by FDEM. These requests may come at any time of the day or week, as the nature of these alerts is deemed extremely important to the safety of the general public.

**ALERT ARTWORK** - FDEM and FOAA will work together to create templates for those hazards designated as most likely to occur based on previous disaster history. These templates will be provided to all participating member companies. When a disaster request is received, the FDEM representative will provide all pertinent information to the FOAA liaison who will distribute it to the appropriate member company coordinator. The company inserting the alert information will place it into the correct template and return a proof to FOAA via email. FOAA will submit a copy to the FDEM for review and after receiving final approval, notify the member company's coordinator to proceed with posting the artwork.

**POSTINGS** - It will be the responsibility of each participating company to notify FOAA when the alert is posted and provide the tentative duration of that posting. Depending on the member company's individual policy, the emergency alert could be posted exclusively for a designated time and then rotated into the normal rotation of advertisements or posted in another manner. This is solely at the discretion of each member company.

**MODIFICATIONS/CANCELLATIONS** – FDEM will notify FOAA should an alert need modifications based on new information or if the alert has been cancelled and should be removed from the digital billboard. The FOAA liaison will promptly notify all participating member company coordinators.

**PRESS RELEASE** - FOAA will coordinate with FDEM to evaluate each emergency alert and determine if a news release would provide additional awareness about industry efforts. Each participating member company would be recognized in the news release.



# Emergency Alert Templates

<p><b>EMERGENCY ALERT</b></p> <p><b>Hurricane Dean Update</b></p> <p><b>Category 5   Winds of 165 mph</b></p> <p><b>Expected Landfall:</b> <b>Tuesday 4pm   Yucatan Peninsula</b></p>	
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EAS—Hurricane Update

<p><b>EMERGENCY ALERT</b></p> <p><b>Hurricane Dean Update</b></p> <p><b>CONTRAFLOW NOW IN AFFECT:</b> <b>1-10 East &amp; Westbound are being used as Westbound lanes.</b></p>	
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EAS—Contraflow

<p><b>EMERGENCY ALERT</b></p> <p><b>Hurricane Safety Tips</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Prepare an evacuation plan</li><li>-Gather supplies</li><li>-Prepare for high winds</li></ul>	
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EAS—Hurricane Safety Tips

<p><b>EMERGENCY ALERT</b></p> <p><b>Chemical Spill in Geismer</b></p> <p><b>Avoid I-10 Geismer Exit</b></p> <p><b>Highway 22 East bound is SHUT DOWN</b></p>
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EAS—Chemical Spill