

# This Major Manufacturing Company Found the Right Formula for Emergency Alerting



A warehouse operator has a heart attack while on-site at a chemical plant, collapsing without warning as his colleagues rush to call an ambulance. A process creates a hazardous vapor release that has the potential to put a chemical plant and its surrounding area at risk. A severe thunderstorm threatens the safety of workers who are outside and on elevated equipment.

In all three scenarios, communication is critical. The faster one can get the word out about a developing situation, the better. It's not just a matter of efficiency – it's about keeping people safe.

That's what Eastman Chemical Company has always sought to do. A global specialty materials manufacturer headquartered in Kingsport, Tennessee, Eastman was originally established in 1920 to manufacture photographic chemicals for Eastman Kodak. Today, over a century later, it has become a global specialty materials company that produces a broad range of advanced materials, chemicals, and fibers for everyday purposes. The company now has more than 50 manufacturing sites worldwide and employs approximately 14,500 people.

## Eastman Chemical

**Industry:**

Manufacturing

**Location:**

United States

**Product:**

BlackBerry® AtHoc®

**Employees:**

~14,500

**Website:**

<https://www.eastman.com/>

**EASTMAN**

In 2012, as part of a strategic safety improvement initiative to eliminate workplace injuries, the company re-evaluated its emergency notification infrastructure. After finding it lacking, the company opted for an upgrade.

## Overcoming the Complexity of Crisis Communication

Kingsport hosts more than just Eastman Chemical Company's headquarters. It's also the location of a major manufacturing site. With over 7,000 employees and contractors on-site at any given time, the Kingsport plant is not only Eastman's largest manufacturing facility, but also one of the largest in the United States.

"Our site hosts five operating divisions and multiple manufacturing operations, both batch and continuous," explains Keith Bennett, Emergency Services Manager at Eastman. "This is in addition to our corporate campus, which requires completely different messaging from the rest of the facility. Eastman employs its own firefighters, EMTs, and fire maintenance teams at this site, as well."

Eastman's original emergency notification system used only three device platforms, was antiquated, and ill-suited to handle this large site and level of complexity.

"We lacked both standardization and modern technology," says Bennett. "Using three different platforms, including ringdown phones, two-way radios, and pagers, we had the potential for inconsistencies. Sometimes you wouldn't communicate the same message on each device, or sometimes you'd forget to use one of the devices or only terminate the message on one of them. The device technology was also outdated and not reliable."

After evaluating the market, Eastman chose [BlackBerry® AtHoc®](#). Trusted by organizations around the world for collaboration in times of critical events and emergencies, AtHoc offers invaluable situational awareness, visibility, and control. In Eastman's case, it eventually would act as the foundation for a customized, on-premises alerting system known as Eastman Alert.

## The Birth of Eastman Alert

"When we deployed BlackBerry AtHoc, we intended to replace our ringdown phone system," Bennett notes. "But we wanted to retain both our local pager system and our two-way radios as important communication devices. BlackBerry AtHoc had the ability to interface with these legacy devices while at the same time adding new IP addressable devices such as email, computer pop-up messages, and VoIP phones."

Once Eastman completed the initial deployment, it established two different sets of communication templates, one for the manufacturing plant and another for corporate campus. These templates were divided into three categories:

- **Operations Critical Messages:** Incidents or events which do not pose any immediate danger to staff. These include accidental discharges, fire standbys, utility load reductions, and ambulance calls.

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"As far as emergency alerting is concerned, Eastman's needs were incredibly unique. BlackBerry has worked with us every step of the way to help us create a customized solution that fulfilled our requirements in their entirety."

– Keith Bennett,  
Emergency Services Manager,  
Eastman Chemical Company

- **Weather Events:** To include severe thunderstorms, high winds, and tornados.
- **Emergencies:** Incidents that require an immediate response and may be life-threatening. They include fire with evacuation, hazardous vapor release, explosion, or active shooter.

“For both the corporate campus and the manufacturing plant, alerting is managed by our dispatch center, which is staffed by our on-site fire department,” says Bennett. “We also have key personnel trained as incident commanders who have authorization to determine the emergency classification and send out any necessary emergency notifications.”

Eastman has made several customizations to BlackBerry AtHoc since deployment, including:

- Customized voice syntax for chemical/material names.
- Integrated fire alarm panels in its corporate campus, which houses approximately 1,800 personnel.
- The option for employees to receive alerts on personal devices either via mobile app, phone calls, and/or text messages.
- Integrating Eastman Alert with its SharePoint, allowing it to link to more in-depth information in its alerts and easy access to alert history.

Bennett estimates that Eastman sends approximately 600 messages a year, most of which are operations critical messages, as well as testing the system on the last Thursday of each month.

## Sending a Clear Message

In 2017, an explosion occurred in the Kingsport facility’s coal gasification plant. It was one of the most significant process safety events in 50 years. This was also a considerable test of Eastman Alert – and it passed with flying colors.

“We immediately went to our highest category of emergency classification, sending out a Class D alert to all personnel,” Bennett recalls. “This indicated that a significant event had occurred, which could impact both the site and the community. The Eastman Alert system allowed us to quickly and broadly communicate critical information to ensure that all personnel could get out of harm’s way.”

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“The fact that we can communicate so rapidly is a real safety benefit for Eastman, and the fact that we have the solution installed on-premises adds an extra layer of reliability. I know that if I need to, I can send out an emergency alert without having to depend on the Internet, and that’s incredibly valuable.”

– Keith Bennett,  
*Emergency Services Manager,  
Eastman Chemical Company*

Critical emergencies aside, Eastman is able to effortlessly convey everything from weather issues to medical events. Eastman's Kingsport facility also has the option to act as a host for other sites, allowing for significant internal growth at a reduced cost of infrastructure. Currently, it has deployed its alerting system to five other sites.

"Through BlackBerry AtHoc, we've been able to communicate both effectively and in a timely manner," concludes Bennett. "It's really helped keep our employees safe."

For more information, visit [BlackBerry.com/AtHoc](https://BlackBerry.com/AtHoc) and follow [@AtHoc](https://twitter.com/AtHoc) on Twitter.

## About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry's vision is clear — to secure a connected future you can trust.

For more information, visit [BlackBerry.com](https://BlackBerry.com) and follow [@BlackBerry](https://twitter.com/BlackBerry).

