

Nixle helps agencies make their communities safer, more vibrant places to live, work, and visit. The Community Information Service allows you to share important advisories and community information immediately via text message, email, and over the web.

But “connecting” with residents takes more than technology. These communication and writing tips will help you make your message more effective and engaging. Remember: your Wire is not a “journalist” platform: proper writing etiquette is out; effective, frequent messaging is in!

DO simplify and stick to the basics.

Write one thought per sentence. Be sure to include the 5W’s in your description: who, what, where, when, and why.

DO speak in plain language.

Ask yourself: How would I explain this to my mother?

DO explain the urgency.

The power of Nixle is delivering trustworthy information in “real time.” Be sure to make it clear why residents need to know now. They’re depending on you.

DO include a “call to action.”

Ask yourself: What do I want residents to do with this information? People want to contribute to their communities, so don’t be afraid to ask for help if you need it!

DO reread before publishing.

Use “Preview Publication” to proofread the notification before it goes out. Check it over for accuracy and the “call to action.” Reading the text aloud can help you discover areas that may be unclear.

DON’T use ALL CAPS or exclamation marks!!

DON’T assume everyone knows where or what you’re talking about.

If you have a specific location as the incident location in your message, does every reader know where that location is?

Nixle helps agencies make their communities safer, more vibrant places to live, work, and visit. The Community Information Service allows you to share emergency information as well as important advisories and community event information immediately via text message, email, and over the web.

People lead busy lives. That's why the delivery of real-time information to cellular phones is so important: it gives citizens actionable information about their community when they're on the go.

Writing effective SMS ("text") messages for public/mass communications is different than writing text messages to friends and relatives. A good SMS message is brief, understandable, and complete, making a point in as few words possible.

Remember the recipient

Why do they care about this text message? What should they do? Most text messages are acted upon within 20 minutes of receipt. Mobile is at its best when it demands immediate attention and requires an action that is easily acted-upon.

Write in phrases, not sentences

Keep thoughts short and simple: get your main point across, remove all non-essential information, make sure to tell recipient what to do with the information.

Drop words, punctuation

Remove articles (a, an, the) where appropriate. Use only one space after periods. Avoid spaces around dashes. Eliminate unnecessary punctuation. Use numerals instead of spelling out numbers where possible. (8 instead of eight)

Abbreviations

Be careful how you abbreviate: not everyone has the same "shorthand." Abbreviations should be common and in context.

Avoid "insider" terms

Certain language is common to agencies everywhere. But, will the citizens you want to communicate with understand it? If not, choose other words. What you publish is as important as making sure it is understood.

EXAMPLE 1

Original

The Anywhere USA Police Dept. requests the public's assistance in determining the location of a missing "at risk" person... Last seen: 4th & Wdbrg

Revised

Help needed to find missing senior: Af Am Male, 5'9",175 lbs, BLK hair, BL eyes, dragon tattoo right arm. Last seen: 4th & Woodbridget

EXAMPLE 2

Original

The Anywhere USA Recreation Department announces the creation of coed indoor soccer leagues for the new season. Register soon at P & R.

Revised

Registration begins Oct 9 for city kids coed indoor soccer league. Sign up at city rec centers or call Rec. Dept. at 555-123t4

EXAMPLE 3

Original

The Anywhere USA Police Department reports a multi-vehicle accident. Avoid the intersection until further notice.

Revised

Multi-vehicle accident: Elmhurst & York. Intersection closed. Traffic delays thru 7pm. Alt route: Pineville-Lyndall-Prairie