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YANKEETOWN, FLORIDA

*Resilience and Communication:
How Yankeetown Weathered Hurricane Idalia*

YANKEETOWN

"Old Florida" on the Nature Coast est. 1923

Actual Notification sent by Yankeetown Officials

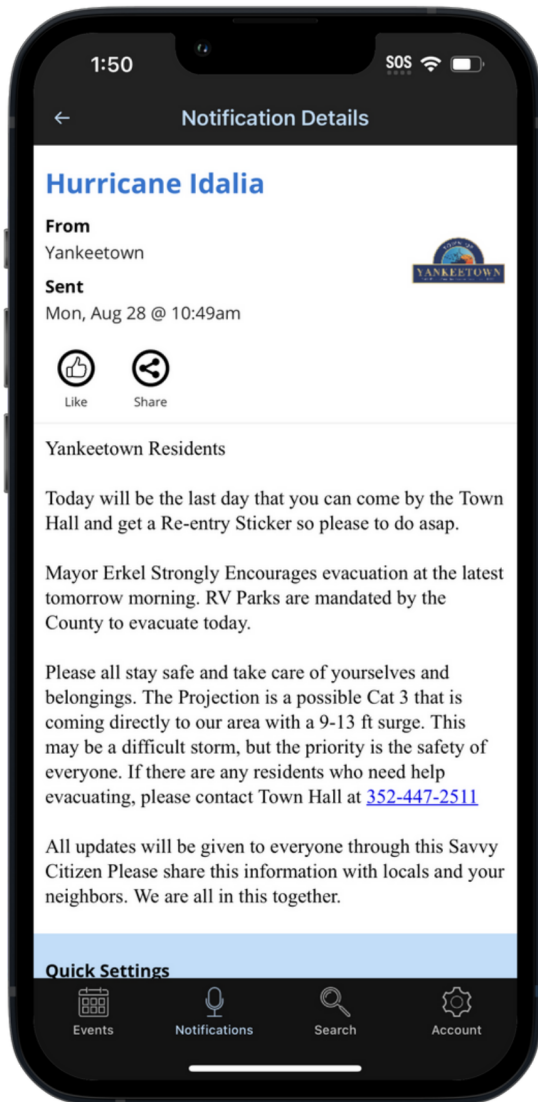
INTRODUCTION

Yankeetown (Levy County, FL) is located just upstream from where the Withlacoochee River flows into the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to being a commercial fishing town with oak shaded streets draped with Spanish moss and lined with old Florida cracker homes, Yankeetown serves as home to some and a second, vacation home to others. Recently, the resolve of Yankeetown residents and local officials was tested when Hurricane Idalia came ashore just north of the community as a category 4 hurricane.

"The storm surge was between 7 and 8 feet" says Will Ary, Yankeetown's manager. *"We had 138 homes damaged and 30 that are not inhabitable."* This equates to about 67% of the homes in Yankeetown suffering hurricane damage. Given the destruction, Yankeetown amazingly suffered no loss of life. This is a testament to Yankeetown officials and their commitment to resident communication and safety.

CHALLENGES

- **Effective Resident Communication:** Ensuring timely and clear communication with residents about the impending hurricane and evacuation procedures was a critical challenge faced by the local government.
- **Resource Allocation and Coordination:** Coordinating the allocation of resources such as shelter, food, and cleanup services to affected residents while effectively communicating these offerings posed a significant challenge for the local government.
- **Managing Public Expectations:** Balancing residents' expectations and providing accurate information through multiple stages of the hurricane response, from pre-landfall warnings to post-storm support, required careful communication strategies.



"We have relied on Savvy Citizen to keep residents informed with all types of information and had subsequently built a strong base of users. Since the hurricane, our user base has almost doubled. Now, when I send a notification out about FEMA information or supplies, I have residents calling or showing up within minutes in response to my message"

— Will Ary, Yankeetown's manager

SOLUTION

Aided by Savvy Citizen, Yankeetown began notifying residents of the Hurricane threat four days prior to it making landfall. Leveraging Savvy Citizen's automatic National Weather Service alerts, Yankeetown kept residents informed as the hurricane approached and its track and forecast became more certain. ***"Levy County provides National Weather Service alerts as well however we have found the Savvy Citizen weather alerts contained more information from other categories,"*** states Ary. Three days prior to landfall, Levy County issued an evacuation order that was delivered to residents via Savvy Citizen. ***"We were able to evacuate residents early which minimized the potential for losses,"*** says Ary.

Once the hurricane departed, Yankeetown went into full cleanup and support mode. ***"As soon as it was safe, we began communicating with residents via Savvy Citizen regarding supplies we had available to help them as well as getting access to local, state and federal resources,"*** says Ary. This included everything from free hot meals, to access to mobile restroom facilities/showers, to debris clean-up services, to temporary housing. Yankeetown was even soliciting residents for their needs sending a notification asking residents what they needed. ***"We did our best to make the notifications personal. We wanted residents to understand that we are here to help them in any way we can,"*** says Ary.

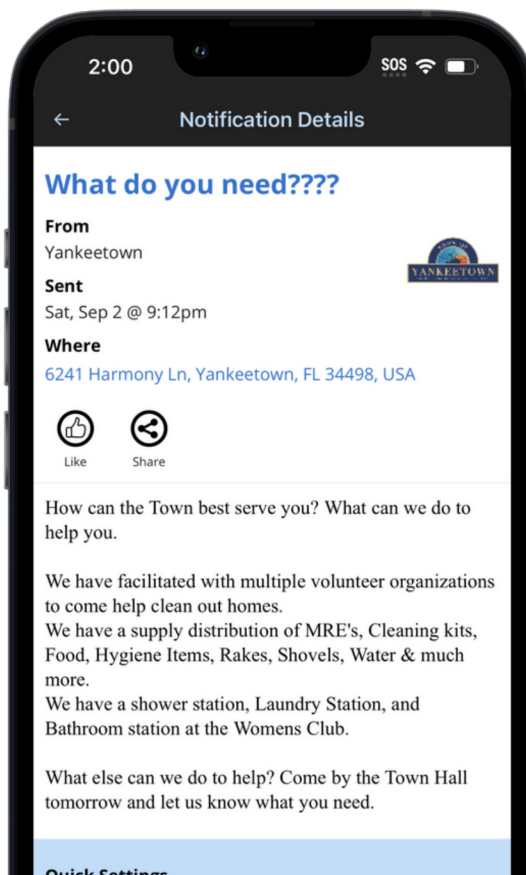
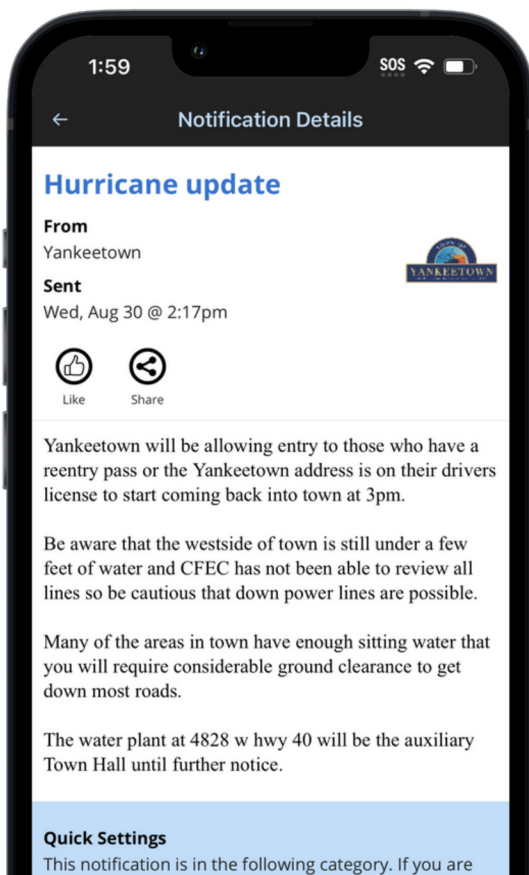
CONCLUSION

Overall, in the days prior, during, and two weeks after the hurricane, Yankeetown sent more than 70 notifications to residents. ***"Even prior to the hurricane, resident communication was a top priority for us. We have relied on Savvy Citizen to keep residents informed with all types of information and had subsequently built a strong base of users. Since the hurricane, our user base has almost doubled. Now, when I send a notification out about FEMA information or supplies, I have residents calling or showing up within minutes in response to my message,"*** says Ary.

For Yankeetown, their commitment to their resident communication, safety and public service has certainly proven strong despite the devastation of a hurricane. Although many of Yankeetown's residents suffered property damage and rebuilding will take time, residents know they have the support of their local government every step of the way.

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