



# Covia

## Speeding alarm response and improving resident safety

### Results\*

- Enables reliable staff communication anywhere on campus throughout the community.
- Removes delays once caused by manual dispatching and unreliable radio links.
- Integrates with existing resident life safety system, improving resident security.

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**- Chris Dana**

Vice President of  
Information Technology  
Covia

### Challenge

Leadership at Covia were looking to improve their ability to respond quickly when an independent or assisted living resident needed help.

Covia’s independent and assisted living residents have the option of wearing Wi-Fi-based personal emergency response pendants that allow them to call for help if they fall or need medical assistance. Covia also provides an option to memory care and health center residents who pose a wander risk to wear a wireless bracelet that triggers an alarm if they leave safe areas without being accompanied by staff.

Despite having modern Wi-Fi infrastructures in all of its communities, Covia identified certain operational workflows with fragmented and poorly integrated communications. Some departments relied on aging two-way radio systems that didn’t work in all locations; others used a combination of smartphones, intercoms, pagers and even iPods. The gaps and disconnects between communication tools made it hard for staff members to work together efficiently and serve residents consistently.

Covia, a California nonprofit that operates six life plan and multi-level communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, delivers a range of innovative residential and aging services that promote intellectual, physical, social and spiritual well-being. It also serves up to 10,000 seniors in the greater community through its Community Services programs. Two of Covia’s communities were beginning to plan an expensive radio system replacement when the organization recognized it as an opportunity to implement a more efficient solution throughout all of its communities.

### Vocera Solution

“We wanted to use our Wi-Fi infrastructure to improve staff communication overall,” says Chris Dana, Vice President of Information Technology at Covia. “Vocera technology appeared to us like a Swiss army knife for communication. We were really intrigued.”

The Vocera solution allows caregivers to text securely with smartphones or make calls hands-free with the wearable Vocera communication device.

“When we saw the Vocera communication device and learned about the technology, lightbulbs started going off in our heads,” recalls Karen Kemp, IT Application Support Manager at Covia. “The Vocera system integrates with so much other software that we already have in place. Compared with our two-way radios, it seemed like a huge value-add from a life safety perspective. We all walked out thinking, ‘Wow, we really want this!’”

Covia soon acquired enough Vocera communication devices to equip staff in every department at all six communities. “Our executive directors saw the benefit and wanted everyone on the system,” says Kemp. “They didn’t want half of their staff to have Vocera communication devices and half still carrying radios.”

In April 2016, Covia partnered with the Vocera professional services team and workflow consulting partner, NeTeam Innovations, to design custom workflows for each Covia community. “Every community is different, so every community gets to decide how they want the system to work,” says Kemp. “We trained every staff member at every community – security, maintenance, housekeeping, clinical, administration and the executive directors. Everyone uses the Vocera system to communicate, even IT.”

Covia moved quickly to integrate the Vocera system with its resident safety solution. All alarms now pass to the Vocera system for routing to the designated responder through a community-customized workflow. “An alert might go to security in one community and skilled nursing in another,” says Kemp. “If no one from the intended recipient group answers, the system can escalate to an urgent broadcast. Everyone on staff will receive the message and whoever is closest can respond — even a maintenance worker raking leaves around the corner. While he can’t provide medical care, he can comfort the resident and coordinate with other staff through his Vocera communication device.” Each alert is delivered as both voice and text messages that include the resident’s first name, last initial, location and the type of event. All alert data originates in the resident safety system and flows to the Vocera system.

## Results\*

“The integration of Vocera technology with our life-safety system is like having our own 911 center,” Kemp says. “By eliminating the delays once caused by manual dispatching and unreliable radio links, it lets us respond to urgent resident needs faster and more intelligently. It also improves worker efficiency by eliminating the need to continuously staff a dispatch workstation.”

The staff has also seen an improvement in routine staff communication; it’s easier to coordinate activities, get information or summon assistance. “I’m out in the communities all the time, talking with different departments about the Vocera system and how it’s working for them,” Kemp adds. “Over and over they tell me there’s no way they’ll ever give it up.”

“In one community, we have a single clinical team looking after a memory-care unit and two assisted-living buildings. With the Vocera system, team members can locate each other no matter where they are or what they’re doing, from one end of the campus to the other. They don’t have to walk to the nurse station to check messages. They don’t have to drop what they’re doing to pick up a phone or a radio. They couldn’t live without the Vocera solution.”

Covia is now providing a level of service more often associated with the hospitality industry. “There’s a reason Vocera technology is used in hundreds of acute care settings,” Dana says. “It’s a really effective communication tool. It’s time for senior living to start adopting some of the solutions that work so well in other settings to improve the services we provide to our residents. The people moving into our communities today are looking for a five-star experience. Vocera is one technology that can help us align our services with those expectations.”

“I’ve come to see the Vocera system as a way to glue together all the different functions our people perform in our communities every day, and all of the technologies we rely on to complete them,” Dana says. “Vocera technology helps improve our ability to keep our residents healthy, safe and happy. How do you put a value on that? If you ask a family member, it’s infinite.”

\*In addition to Vocera technology, the facility’s results may reflect the additional training, policies, procedures and specific configuration parameters implemented by the facility. The results are not necessarily representative of what another facility may experience.

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