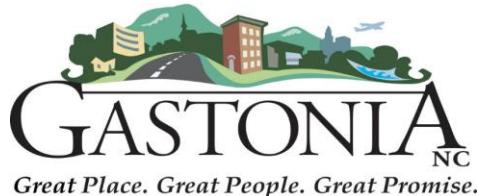




ELECTRIC DIVISION GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA



Communications Plan - CUSTOMER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN For TRU+E Alerts | May 2023

Background

The City of Gastonia's Electric Division of Two Rivers Utilities is introducing a text messaging platform for utility customers to inform them about power outages and other information as well as provide them with the ability to report power outages. This new platform is being introduced and is supported by the following information that shows the benefits to businesses.

- **Open Rates:** Studies have shown that over 95% of all texts are opened.
- **Immediacy:** Text messages are usually read within minutes of being sent.
- **Personalized Experience:** Two-way, interactive texting fosters a more responsive, personal dialog.
- **Texting is Preferred:** Let's face it, some people just prefer all communications on their cell phones.

On May 1, 2023 Two Rivers Utilities and City of Gastonia Electric Division customers will be notified that they have been opted into the text messaging service and will have the opportunity to opt-out if they choose.

Communications Plan Outline

Purpose

The purpose of this campaign is to inform customers of Gastonia's Electric Division and of Two Rivers water and sewer services that they will be automatically enrolled in a new text-messaging service for service outage notifications.

Campaign Strategy

This four-week campaign will use multiple platforms to inform customers of the new service that uses automated text messages to alert electric, water, and sewer customers of an outage. The date of the "welcome text," provides the basis for the timeline.

Communications Goals

Our goals are two-fold as we implement this plan:

- Create messages that will engage and inform the target audience so that they gain a better understanding and awareness of how the service works, when it will begin, and its benefits.
- Implement communications tactics that are appropriate to convey necessary information about the TRU+E Alerts text messaging service.

Audience

Water, sewer, and electric customers served by the City of Gastonia Electric Division or Two Rivers Utilities.

Message Highlights

The messages to be conveyed using the tactics outlined in this Communications Plan include:

- 1) Features: send/receive notifications, create accounts for other locations, easy to sign-up
- 2) You may receive both COG TRU app and TRU+E Alerts.
- 3) Customers can receive updates about current outages and estimated time of restoration.

Plan Implementation & Tactics

The Communications & Marketing Department will work with the Two Rivers Utilities and Gastonia's Electric Division to implement the plan from April 1 – May 1.

Communications Tactics

This plan will implement low-cost and no-cost robust communications tactics to achieve the communications goals.

- **News Release** – news release to media contacts.

Timeline: April 18

- **Social Media Posts** – posts on the City's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor accounts.

Timeline: April 1 – 30 (twice weekly)

- **Post #1 – Five to six days before the Welcome Text**

If you are a Two Rivers Utilities and Gastonia Electric customer, starting May 1 you'll get automatic text messages through TRU+E Alerts to let you know when there are water, sewer or electrical outages at your address. You're automatically enrolled.

Timeline: April 23 & 24

- **Post #2 – Welcome to TRU+E Alerts! (One to two days before Welcome Text)**

Want advance notice before your service is interrupted by a water repair? Wonder how long your power might be out? You've got it!

TRU+E Alerts are text message that notify TRU and Electric customers of outages that affect you. If you have a water, sewer or electric account with TRU or the City of Gastonia, you're automatically enrolled.

You'll get a welcome text message about the new TRU+E Alerts on May 1. Here's more info (link to City News Source story).

Timeline: April 27 & 29

- **Post #3 – Did you get the TRU+E Alert Welcome Message? (Three to four days after Welcome Text)**

Did you get the TRU+E welcome message? If you're a water or sewer customer of Two Rivers Utilities or an electric customer of the City of Gastonia, you should have received a text on May 1.

Timeline: May 5 & 6

- **Post #4 – TRU+E Alerts are for more than just your home. (10 days after Welcome.)**

Sign up to receive TRU+E Alerts text messages for other addresses, like for elderly loved ones, rental properties, or other family members. You'll need the account number. Choose a nickname like "Mom's house" so you will know where the outage is located. To opt-in call 888-859-0878 and have your account number ready.

Timeline: May 10 & 13

- **Social Media Posts (Spanish)** – posts on the Spanish language Facebook page.
Posts 1, 2, and 3 above translated into Spanish language.
Timeline: Same timeline as above
- **Q&A Sheet (English & Spanish translation)** – includes key messaging and Q&A and will be available to the public or others who may need the information.
Timeline: April 28
- **Online News Source** – *City News Source* article.
Timeline: April 28
- **Website** – an image slider on the website to reinforce messaging and link to a webpage containing more information.
Timeline: April 28
- **Billboards** – up to three billboards will be placed in areas around the city to remind customers about the texting service and its benefits if budget is available.
Timeline: TBD
- **Utility Bill Insert** – message will include information about the upcoming TRU+E Alerts system.
Timeline: April 5 - 28

Estimated Budget

Bill Inserts – Printing (est.)	\$3,360.00 (one mailing, one side)
Billboards (TBD)	\$4,950.00 (four-week flight) - TBD
Graphic Design	\$0 (in-house)

Measurement

We will use the following metrics to measure the success of the campaign: webpage hit, media story placements, social media engagement from April 1-30 and number of customers opted into the platform from May 1 – June 1.

INSTAGRAM

gastonia_nc Introducing TRU+E Alerts! You might have seen details in this month's utility bill already. TRU+E alerts will send a text message when your water, electric, or sewer is going to be out of service or restored. You select which type of text you'd like to receive. Lookout for welcome alerts going out on Monday May 1.

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TWITTER

City of Gastonia @CityofGastonia · Apr 24

Introducing TRU+E Alerts! TRU+E alerts will send a text message when your water, electric, or sewer is going to be out of service or restored. You select which type of text you'd like to receive. Lookout for welcome alerts going out on Monday May 1.

...
 6 likes
 3 DAYS AGO
 Add a comment...
 Post

FACEBOOK



Introducing TRU+E Alerts! You might have seen details in this month's utility bill already. TRU+E alerts will send a text message when your water, electric, or sewer is going to be out of service or restored. You select which type of text you'd like to receive. Lookout for welcome alerts going out on Monday May 1.



TRU+E ALERTS

The City of Gastonia's Two Rivers Utilities and Electric Division is introducing a text messaging feature that will keep you informed about water, sewer, and electric outages and more!

HOW IT WORKS

- You will automatically be opted-into TRU+E Alerts texts to your phone.
- Sign-up or opt-out at any time.
- Receive messages about services at other addresses, too!

QUESTIONS?

utilities@gastonianc.gov

WHAT IT DOES

Get important messages about your service in advance!

SERVICE OUTAGES

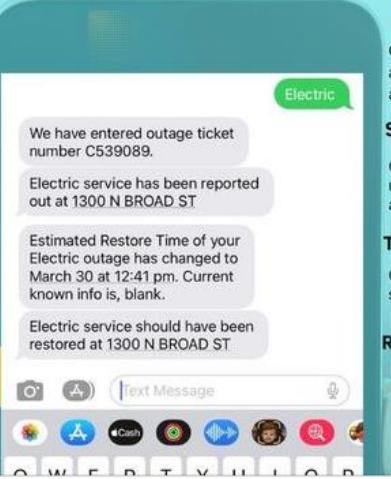
Get notifications about utility outages in your area.

TIME ESTIMATES

Get notified about when service is restored.

REPORT OUTAGES 

Report utility outages via text any time, from anywhere.



Boost this post to reach up to 551 more people daily if you spend \$14.

Boost post