

GeoNet chooses Urban Airship's speed, scale to power earthquake notifications

GeoNet's Objectives

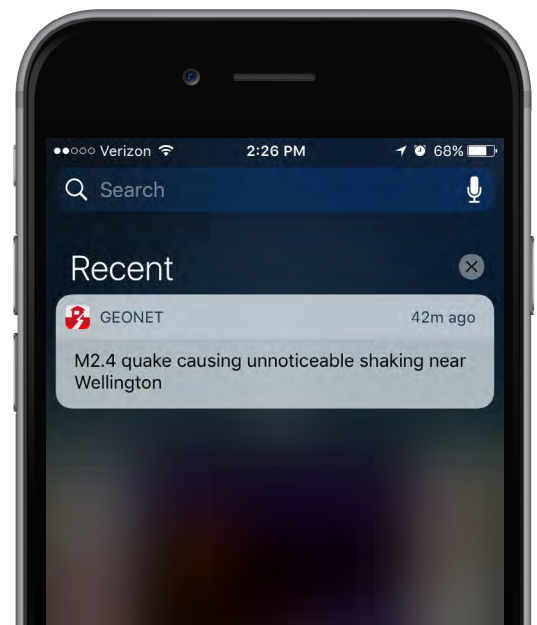
- Quickly and reliably alert users to earthquakes and volcanic activity
- Via a preference center (notification rules), allow users to customize types of notifications based on magnitude, location and depth
- Provide users timely information and sense of ease via push notifications

THE CHALLENGE

Earthquakes have always been a common occurrence in New Zealand – after all, the country sits on two tectonic plates (the Australian and the Pacific). But a spike of seismic activity over seven years has left residents wanting information on the latest activity even faster.

GNS Science monitors earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides and tsunamis for New Zealand. Released in 2013 as part of GeoNet, the GeoNet Quake app gives New Zealanders the instant ability to know information on the latest quake or volcanic activity almost right as it happens.

Evidence of this desire is clear when analyzing New Zealand's web traffic data. In 2016, the GeoNet was the top trending NZ-based search on Google. Additionally, the GeoNet Quake app is installed on nearly 10% of smartphones in New Zealand, and the app remains their most popular channel (the institute also has a Facebook and Twitter presence).



The GeoNet Quake app keeps users informed on the latest seismic activity via push notifications. The app lets users customize the types of notifications based on magnitude, location and depth.

RESULTS

 **>109 m**

More than 109 million push notifications delivered during the 2016 Kaikoura quake.

 **79.2%**

influenced open rate on push notifications

“Using Urban Airship has made our messaging process more robust. Before, it was manual and time consuming – now, we can count on large volumes of push notifications to quickly get delivered, giving us peace of mind. The speed and scale of service allows us to focus on more strategic issues in our organization.”

Sara McBride
GeoNet Information Manager

THE SOLUTION

GNS Science relies on Urban Airship Engage as its most efficient channel to quickly disseminate information to users devices during and after earthquakes. The team uses push notifications to instantly share quake information such as location and magnitude.

To ensure users are getting the information they want, the app uses a preference center, allowing users to customize the types of notifications they receive based on intensity, magnitude, depth and location. GeoNet then creates tags based on this information, which are sent to Urban Airship to deliver the message.

Sara McBride, GeoNet Information Manager, said many users will choose to receive notifications not only for the area they reside in, but where their friends and family live. “That way, if user has relatives in Cheviot and a quake happens, they can check in and see if they’re safe,” said McBride.

CASE IN POINT

When the November 14, 2016 Kaikoura Earthquake (a significant 7.8 magnitude quake) occurred, the GNS Science team delivered more than 109 million push notifications during/following the quake.

“I remember being on call for public information duty at GeoNet that night, feeling shaking and waking up to a push notification reporting the earthquake before my pager even went off,” she said, highlighting the speed of push as a valuable element during a time of danger.

“Being able to immediately respond to activity – notifying users about the magnitude and location during a quake – is really informative for people and helping them stay safe when an earthquake occurs,” she said.

The team also employs push notifications after the main episode has subsided as there are often numerous aftershocks – sometimes for several weeks or more.

“Feeling ‘phantom quakes’ is definitely something people experience,” McBride said. “Push notifications about these more minor quakes help provide a sense of ease, as it confirms what people are experiencing.”

GeoNet’s audience frequently visits the app, and the team sees a spike in app opens as well as time spent in app after sending a push notification. The app also shares resident preparedness information via connecting to its corporate blog. They are exploring the addition of messaging related to education and preparedness in the future.

THE VALUE OF URBAN AIRSHIP

“Using Urban Airship has made our messaging process more robust. Before, it was manual and time consuming – now, we can count on large volumes of push notifications to quickly get delivered, giving us peace of mind,” said McBride. “The speed and scale of service allows us to focus on more strategic issues in our organization.”