



# THE STATE JOURNAL

## Charleston Firm to Distribute Emergency Alert Software

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CHARLESTON — Since 1975, **Software Computer Group Inc.** has provided software and computer assistance for many government agencies throughout the Mountain State.

"Sixty-five percent of our business is technical support for West Virginia court systems," said company President Robert "Butch" Evans. "We have developed software and provided hardware for all the magistrate courts and 39 of the circuit courts."

Now the Charleston-based company will take on an additional role, something far different than wiring the judicial system.

"Since we started this company, we have been in the prosecution business in the courts," Evans said. "We are now heading into the business of saving lives."

Software Computer Group (SWCG) has signed a contract with Nashville, Tenn.-based **W.A.R.N. LLC**, a technology and communications company.

W.A.R.N. stands for Wide Area Rapid Notification. The W.A.R.N. system is designed to alert emergency personnel or the public during catastrophic emergencies. SWCG will be the distributor of W.A.R.N. software and technical support for the Mountain State.

"This program will help change the way we notify the public during disasters," Evans said. "We can alert the public in a matter of minutes."

The W.A.R.N. system is a program designed for homeland security and has been distributed widely throughout the United States after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Many mass alert systems incorporate heavy computer hardware and solicit use of broadcasts from radio and television. Evans said W.A.R.N. contacts residents directly because it can send an alert to a mobile phone or a secure Internet site.

In an emergency, such as a natural, chemical or biological disaster, emergency personnel can notify the public by logging on to the W.A.R.N. program. They can type the disaster information and provide detailed instructions. When the message is sent, it runs through a secured server and is distributed to e-mail accounts, pagers, cell phones, telephones and fax machines throughout the area. Evans said thousands of residents can receive notification in minutes.

"It's better to notify 80 percent of people than 5 percent," he said. "This can be the best way to alert the mass audience."

Evans said the software is sophisticated — it incorporates global satellite software, allowing the sender to pinpoint the area down to a specific street. An emergency services worker even can activate a broadcast using a cell phone, calling a central telephone line and using a password.

"Emergency services can literally circle a place on the map and a broadcast can be transmitted to phone numbers only in that area," he said.

In addition to disasters, Evans said W.A.R.N. also can be used for additional purposes when it is vital to send a broadcast to a large population.

"This system can be used for Amber Alerts, school closings or area evacuations," he said. "Also the system can be used as a command system for emergency services, to deploy police, fire or ambulances only."

SWCG has been the statewide representative of the W.A.R.N. software for about four years. Evans said **Mason County 911**, **Jackson County Health Department** and **Metro 911** in the Kanawha Valley have installed W.A.R.N. technology. He also said the **Department of Health and Human Resources** have a blanket purchase order for the technology.

That has prompted SWCG to add a technical support center to their business.

The company is in the process of turning the second story of its Bigley Avenue office into a seven- to 10-station support station facility as a part of its contract with W.A.R.N. LLC. Evans said the company, which employs 10 full-time workers, soon will add employees to its payroll.

"We are growing and expanding," he said. "We don't know by how much yet, but it could be big. It may five jobs and it may be 50, and it may be a lot more. We're still trying to manage growth based on W.A.R.N.'s increasing customer base."

Evans said W.A.R.N. software costs around \$10,000, but that is far less than other emergency notification systems, which can cost \$75,000 to \$150,000. Installation and training can be completed in one day, he said.

For information SWCG and the W.A.R.N. system, visit [www.swcg-inc.com](http://www.swcg-inc.com).