

ADVANCES IN CELL PHONE TECHNOLOGY FOR RAPID ACCIDENT RESPONSES

Jake Pipinich and Charlie Schreck

Pierce Couch Hendrickson Baysinger & Green, LLP

One of your tractor-trailers was just involved in a catastrophic accident in a remote area. Your driver needs immediate assistance. That driver is nervous, probably scared out of their mind, about to be interviewed by law enforcement, and will be taken for drug/alcohol testing. Law enforcement may already be in the process of moving the truck, the other vehicles or debris to get traffic moving. Statements, some possibly incriminating, are being taken. Witnesses are leaving the scene. Nearby surveillance videos are starting to roll over. One of the troopers involved in the acci-

dent has already sent a text message to a friend of his who practices personal injury law in the area, and potential plaintiff attorneys are already mobilizing to the scene. In short, time is of the essence, and you need someone with legal training to get out there, pronto.

You have a law firm's rapid response team on call. That team has presumably trained to respond to accidents on a moment's notice. They have training, gear, knowledge, experience, and hopefully the phone number of a few accident reconstructionists. Everything is in place to

snap into action in response to an urgent call regarding a serious accident. So, when that accident happens, you make the call, hoping to reach an attorney who can help the driver and preserve the evidence. But the call comes through, rings four (4) times and goes to voicemail. You wait a couple of minutes, knowing that time is of the essence and that your driver is sitting on the side of the road. Every second that goes by is another second with your driver alone on the scene, with evidence being altered or destroyed. You call again. Four (4) more rings to the silenced phone, and it goes straight

to voicemail. What are you supposed to do? You call the next firm in line. It goes to the firm who answered the call. If the carrier/client and the attorney could have touched base quicker and more reliably via phone, this nightmare scenario could have been avoided. Putting some thought into your preparations now may help you avoid a similar scenario in the future.

With the advent of numerous “smart home” technologies, constant cell-phone notifications, calls, texts, alerts and other features that will “ping” a phone at night, many people silence their phones while they sleep. This is important for restful/uninterrupted sleep, but also to maintain some sense of sanity. However, this presents a challenge for rapid-response attorneys, experts, adjusters, vendors and the like as someone must be available to take calls at odd hours and locations. Furthermore, people have lives. They go on vacation, consume alcohol, make plans and have other things that interfere with being able to field potential rapid response calls 24/7. There are alternatives (i.e., pagers, multiple phones, call schedules, “on call” weekends and other avenues to designate specific persons to answer calls), but these alternatives also have drawbacks: numerous additional devices, extensive planning and the reality that putting attorney or client cell-phone numbers on company websites further compromises any hope of privacy or work/life balance.

Technology has made advancements that may alleviate this problem and allow a group of select “rapid response” attorneys or a rapid-response team within a firm, company or organization to have a call system setup on a single phone that will prevent them from having to pass around numerous devices, develop call schedules or publish their personal phone number to the internet. iPhone 12 and later and most newer (2020 forward) Android-based phones have the ability to run dual-sim cards, essentially putting two separate phone lines into a single phone. There is a nominal cost with the provider/network, but the phone itself and its basic functions are identical to just one “personal” cell phone. When properly equipped, the phone will show two lines: a “primary” and “secondary” line. Several attorneys in a firm or a rapid response team within an organization can have these dual-sim, dual line phones and simply use the primary number as their personal cell-phone. The second line can then be used as a separate “rapid response” number that can be provided internally or to the internet/websites for calls designated as rapid response.

However, simply having a second line does not solve the problem of silencing the

phone during sleeping hours or making sure that calls are not missed, but recent technological advancements can help solve this problem as well. AT&T, for example, has a simple solution to this issue via call roll-over, which can easily be implemented between your designated rapid-response attorneys or agents. This process is called Conditional Call Forwarding and requires the use of CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) Codes. These codes/protocols vary somewhat between providers but should be relatively easy to implement on modern phones. For an iPhone running on the AT&T Network, for example, you can select the designated rapid response line, and dial the following:

***61*the-number-to-be-forwarded-to# or
*61*406-586-1588#**

The 61 is the network command for call forwarding when a call remains unanswered. Check for a confirmation tone after entering the number, and if the forwarded party answers the forwarded call, the feature is activated. You can change the number of rings before a call is forwarded by entering *47 and following the prompts. When you hear a dial tone, enter 12 for 2 rings, 18 for 3 rings or 24 for 4 rings. There are numerous additional call features that fall under the Conditional Call Forwarding rubric that may assist with your unique needs.

For Android phones, from the home screen, go to the phone app itself, menu, settings, supplementary services and call forwarding. For unanswered calls (after selecting a number of rings), select the number you want the call forwarded to, or use similar CDMA codes such as those above (which vary by provider), but are very similar to the iPhone/ATT codes herein. Additionally, some Android phones use a “Call Assistant” number to complete Conditional Call Forwarding, where “Call Assistant” can be internally toggled to forward unanswered calls. These features vary via phone/provider but are easily setup via vendor for newer Android phones.

With these features enabled on a secondary line, the rapid-response designees within an organization no longer need multiple phones, pagers, schedules or otherwise. One initial point of contact can forward a call to a secondary, who can, in turn, forward to a third point of contact and so forth. This technology can work seamlessly with the user’s original primary line, and that person does not need to switch back and forth to have both a primary/personal line and a business/secondary line dedicated to rapid-response or critical work calls, which can then forward to a secondary user’s rapid-response or critical work

call line with no additional input from the end user. From a customer service perspective, when clients/carriers are calling for a rapid response, time is of the essence, and quickly deploying an attorney is critical. This technology helps to make sure that calls are routed within an organization to the correct people as promptly as possible.

Better yet, the secondary or rapid response line can be left on during the night with the phone’s primary or personal line turned off and the “do not disturb” setting on the phone activated. This will mute any incoming personal calls, mute notifications, but still allow the phone to ring for a call placed to the rapid-response number. As such, a user can sleep without text/email notifications or calls to the personal line, but calls will still ring through to the rapid response line. Anyone wishing to receive personal calls to the primary number can leave that line turned on, or the rapid-response number can be given to important persons as an alternative in the event of an emergency.

Put together, this technology and programming essentially provides the user with the best of both worlds in having a single phone that can pass critical calls around within an organization and be partially silenced as necessary. We believe this technology will assist clients by providing superior customer service in the event that a rapid-response call is needed in, not only the transportation arena, but also across other practice groups/industries. Applied correctly, it should help you rest easier, knowing the lawyers who need to be there at the drop of a hat will pick up the call, thus avoiding the nightmare scenario discussed above.



Jake Pipinich is a partner with [Pierce Couch Hendrickson Baysinger & Green, LLP](#) in the Transportation/Logistics practice group and heads up the Rapid Accident Response Line. While not at work, Jake is happily married to Sarah Pipinich, and the pair raise backyard chickens and are avid lake boaters.



Charlie Schreck is a partner with [Pierce Couch Hendrickson Baysinger & Green, LLP](#), a member of the Transportation/Logistics Practice Group and Rapid Response Team. While not at work, Charlie is happily married to Allyson Schreck and the pair are raising their two-year-old, Graham, and newborn, Jovie.