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All clear: Project expands emergency alert language options [1]



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In an emergency, clear and timely information is critical to keep people safe. Information shared in a language that recipients don't speak can put them in a vulnerable position.

CU Boulder's director of Events and Emergency Management Garry DeJong faced this challenge when sending faculty, staff and students emergency communications about weather or campus incidents.

In response, he brought together RAVE administrators from every University of Colorado campus, the CU Boulder Registrar's Office and University Information Services (UIS) to find a solution.

Arriving at a solution was simple: The university's emergency notification system, RAVE, offered a translation process in multiple languages.

"How — the technical part of building those options into processes — was the big challenge," DeJong said.

This initiative ultimately developed solutions and processes to allow students, faculty and staff to select their preferred languages for emergency communications, using Campus Solutions and the employee portal.

"This was a meaningful initiative with several teams working to ensure that — in a potentially scary or confusing situation — students and employees will be able to obtain that message in their first language and eliminate confusion for them at the moment," UIS Solutions Manager Lindsey Apodaca said.

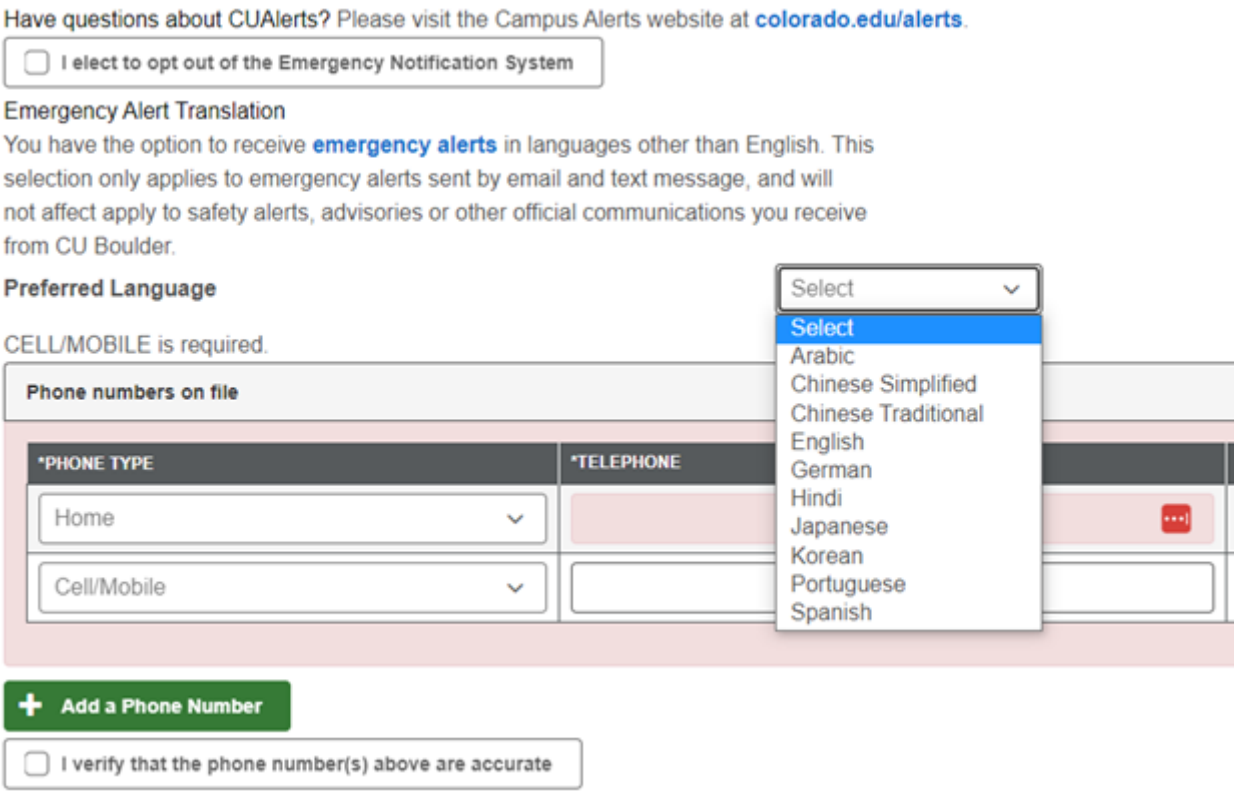
Translating ideas into solutions

The UIS CU-SIS development team, specifically Soumya Suresh and Brad Baker, made changes to student preregistration systems to include new language options. The change debuted in April 2023 [3].

When students register each semester, they now have the option to select a preferred

language for RAVE alerts.

Students can select from the following 10 languages: Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, English, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Spanish.



Similarly, Janelle Fossett and Laura Haller from the UIS HCM team created options within MyCUInfo to allow CU Boulder faculty and staff to choose from four language options other than English: Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Hindi and Spanish. These features debuted in January 2023 [4]. Depending on feedback, more languages may be added to the employee options.

Amar Tekriwal led the UIS Integrations team in ensuring that information submitted by students or employees was correctly transferred to RAVE.

Apodaca and her team tested the new integrations and problem-solved issues such as character limits on texting. An emergency message in English might meet the text character limit, while a translation may not. The solution was RAVE showing any characters beyond the limit in red, so the sender can reword more concisely and meet the limit in all the languages.

Future expansion

This project built the foundation for RAVE translations to be expanded to the other University of Colorado campuses.

“While Boulder is the first to implement this option, we’re in debt to the valuable contributions of our partners at Anschutz, Denver and UCCS, who worked on this with us for over a year,” said DeJong.

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