



NXT Testing Procedures

It's the situation you want to avoid: An emergency occurs, you go to start a scenario and receive an error message saying that the scenario cannot activate. What can you do to prevent this from happening? Routine testing of your scenarios and the Communicator! NXT system is vitally important to ensure accuracy and expected results during a live activation.

- ✚ **Your contacts.** . . should be trained in how to respond to an activation and tested with different activations periodically to keep them familiar with the process.
- ✚ **Scenario.** . . should be tested upon initial creation, and then periodically thereafter using each activation method: by phone, by computer and via **Activation Scheduler**, to insure optimal performance and to catch any hardware malfunctions (e.g., a dead card in the PBX) before an emergency scenario needs to be activated..

Train Contacts

Educate your users beforehand so that they know what to expect and how to respond. This ensures the success of scenario tests and provides you with adequate feedback on the benefits of the system and who needs further instruction.

- ✚ **Explain what the system is.** For example: *Communicator! NXT is a system that relays messages to selected individuals' devices in a timely matter so that they can respond as quickly as possible to a situation.*
- ✚ **How the system works.** For example: *After a scenario has been activated, the system will contact your devices to relay a message. This message will either be directive or informative. Follow the instructions. If you are receiving a message by phone, do not hang up until it says, 'Thank you, goodbye.'*
- ✚ **Let them know that you will be testing the system frequently** so that they can become familiar with the system. For example: *We will be sending a test message to your devices to be sure they are in working order. Then, we will send a test message every Friday.*
- ✚ **Describe the types of situations that might occur** when the contacts might receive communication through Communicator! NXT!. For example: *We use the system for Weather Warnings/Weather Advisories, Bomb Threats, Community Warnings, Data Disruptions, Emergency Meetings, System Tests, School Closings, etc.*
- ✚ **Describe what the contacts might expect.** For example: *We will be utilizing your work phone, home phone, cellular phone, alpha pager and email device to contact you. Some of the calls will require a PIN to receive the voice message – your PIN will be the last four digits of your Social Security Number. You can identify a phone call from the system because the first sentence in the message always begins with 'Hello. This is Communicator! NXT'.*
- ✚ **Have your contacts educate family members** on the existence of the system and what their response should be in case of a call. Sites have used refrigerator magnets, quick reference cards, etc. for families' use.
- ✚ **Explain the contacts' responsibilities.** For example: *Contact Sally Smith if your information has changed (e.g., phone numbers, pager numbers, email addresses, etc.). Contact John Doe if you are not getting information (e.g., your pager devices do not receive messages during activation, the system hangs up on you, etc.) or if you have any questions.*

The following is an example of an informative letter that you can send to your users:

To whom it may concern,

Tomorrow, March 26, 2007, The ABC Company preparedness office will be conducting test of our Emergency Mass Notification System.

The Emergency Mass Notification System is a Voice Processing System which uses pre-recorded speech segments to make 24 simultaneous phone calls through the use of a computer and 24 phone lines.

- It uses pre-programmed scenarios and call lists to call each individual/ organization designated for notification.
- It continues to call each customer until everyone is notified or until the preset duration has expired.
- Upon completion a report is printed which lets the emergency preparedness operator know who was called and when. It also lists those not notified so that a follow-up attempt can be made.

When the systems call you, it will say:

“Hello. This is the ABC Company Operations Notification System...”

The system always requires a customer response. This lets the system know if it has reached and individual or an answering machine. It will also ask of you need the message repeated:

Please respond promptly when you are required to answer a question. Failure to respond to ALL of the questions will result in delays throughout the entire scenario and will also result in you getting called back again by the system.

Please stay on the line until the system says “Thank You, Good Bye.”

If you have any questions, call the ABC Company and speak with the System Supervisors.

Respectfully,

John Smith

Test Contacts

You should test your contacts **Monthly** and/or **Quarterly**:





- Begin with simple notifications that familiarize contacts with the system. This will build their confidence in the system.
- To involve all contacts when testing a scenario that has designated fill count, you can **Copy** the scenario and change the *Fill Count* to all (or 0), and the activation message to a ‘test’ message for this particular test (without compromising the ‘real’ scenario). Therefore, every contact will receive notification messages and have a chance to respond. Then, you can review responses to ensure everyone is receiving messages and understands how to react.
- Have your contacts educate family members on the existence of the system and what their response should be in case of a call. Sites have used refrigerator magnets, quick reference cards, etc. for families’ use.
- Review the scenario activation reports for your test scenarios to assess contacts that did not respond. They might need more training or their phone numbers may have changed, etc.
- Review the scenario activation reports for your test scenarios to determine who was not contacted. You can use the *Notify Again* feature to make another attempt to contact these individuals – their device information might need to be updated.

Keep in mind...

- Contacts will not appreciate an activation test at 2:00 AM
- Testing frequently keeps contacts familiar with what to do when they get a notification message
- Testing at different time’s keeps people on their toes.
- You need to test phone numbers that change frequently.

Test Scenarios

You should ALWAYS test your scenario after creating or changing scenario information to ensure the right groups/contacts are being notified, messages are sent to the all devices, message plays as expected, confirm groups have the desired contacts, the duration of the activation allows enough time for contacts to respond and fill positions, etc. In addition, you should test your system and scenarios **Daily, Weekly, Monthly** and/or **Quarterly**:

-  **Daily Test** – the purpose of a daily test is to validate the system is functioning as expected and verify messages are being sent to each device type (voice, email, alpha pager, numeric pager and fax) properly. Typically, a ‘system test’ scenario is created and configured to notify the system administrator (it is also a good idea to also have a back-up person receiving these notifications). For example, use the scenario activation as an alarm clock or schedule a morning call!
 - You can also use the **Activation Scheduler** to automate testing your scenarios.
-  **Weekly Test** – create a more robust scenario, with enough contacts so all lines are being used, to verify that the lines are functioning properly. In addition:
 - Activate this scenario 1) ‘by phone’ (remote activation), 2) ‘by computer’ (via the web) and 3) **Activation Scheduler**, to verify the activation processed as expected and the remote activation line is functioning properly.
 - Include all devices to verify messages are being sent to each device type (voice, email, alpha pager, numeric pager and fax) properly.
 - Make sure the activation messages indicates this is a test and that contacts are aware this test will occur weekly.
 - Review the scenario activation reports for your weekly test scenario to verify there are not any “No Dial Tone” occurrences.
-  **Monthly and/or Quarterly Test** – Activate the scenario monthly with ‘test’ activation messages, to verify that contacts respond and Fill Count is achieved in the prescribed time allotment or Duration (e.g., every position was filled in the allotted 50 minutes).
 - Verify dynamic group assignment – the right people are being notified or, due to personnel changes, a dynamic group might become ‘empty’ and you might have to update the group and/or scenario.
 - Notify all groups/contacts assigned to the scenario to keep them fresh on what their ID codes are and how to interact with the system.
 - Review the scenario activation reports after your large monthly/quarterly test to ensure you do not have “No Dial Tone” occurrences
-  **Keep in mind:**
 - Test frequently! Do not wait until you have a real emergency to ensure the scenario and/or system is functioning properly
 - When testing a newly created scenario, be careful not to put your top officials in the scenario during initial testing. If you make a mistake, they will be the first to know.
 - Listen carefully to the outgoing message.
 - Don't test on a Friday afternoon. In the event you need to troubleshoot an issue, you want to leave plenty of time to achieve resolution prior to the weekend. DCC's Technical Services has full access to all of DCC's resources (e.g., technical staff, training department, etc.) during normal business hours so resolution of the issue can be achieved as quickly as possible.
 - Use DCC's Technical Services to answer questions and recommend best practices. Schedule time with them to run through some of the scenarios you have built before you send them out.

- Verify Test Results
- ✦ Contact individuals that were included in the test scenario activation to verify the appropriate message was received and that they were able to respond as expected.
 - ✦ Review the status messages at the **Scenarios Summary** page for the test scenario.
 - ✦ Access the **Reports** module and review each of the reports for the test scenario to insure the scenario ran as expected.
 - ✦ When you have concluded testing the scenario, it may be necessary to make some changes to the scenario itself, or to the groups that are assigned, contact information, etc. Each time you update or make changes to a scenario, it is a good idea to test the scenario.

- Hosted Customers
- ✦ Inform DCC Hosting Center Support staff of the day and time of your tests if you are using DCC's Hosted solution. The Hosting Center Support staff can then monitor the progress of the activation and assist with any issues that may arise (especially with large activations, e.g., over 10,000 contacts).
 - ✦ Inform DCC Hosting Center Support staff of the day and time you will be testing any backup systems. This is very important as the Hosting Center Support staff will need to maintain the **DataSync**.

How to Test a Scenario

To test a scenario you can change the *Priority* field to **Test**, exclude some groups/contacts by using the **Tagging** function and change the notification message(s) to a “test” message at the **Message Options** page. This will allow the scenario to run as it would normally during a live activation and will allow you to evaluate the results and make corrections as needed. For example, an activation completes in the prescribed amount of time, notification messages are received by participants, messages are clearly understood and not too long, etc.

Note: *Priority* defines the relative importance of the scenario in relation to other scenarios in the **Communicator! NXT** database and gauges allocation of resources. If the scenario is for test purposes only; then it should be rated as **Test** or low on the priority list. If the scenario is for emergency contact purposes; then it should be rated as **Emergency** or high on the list.

Steps to Test a Scenario:

1. At the **Scenarios Summary** page, click the desired scenario name. The **Scenario Details** page displays, defaulting to the **General** tab.
 2. At the **General** tab, check the *Change at Activation* box () that corresponds to the *Priority* field.
 3. Click the **Activations Options** tab heading. The **Activations Option** page displays.
 4. At the **Activations Option** page, check the *Allow Tagging at Activation* box ()
 5. Check the *Change Notification Message(s) at Activation* box ()
 6. Click **Save** to update the scenario. The **Scenarios Summary** page displays.
 7. At the **Scenarios Summary** page, check the box () for the desired scenario, and then click **Proceed to Activation** at the **Scenario Activations** menu. The **Activate Scenario** page displays with the following tabs – **Scenario Options**, **Tagging Options**, **Message Options** and **View Results**.
 8. At the **Scenario Options** page, click at the *Priority* field and select **Test** (optional).
 9. To exclude desired groups and/or contacts from this activation, access the **Tagging Options** page:
 - At the **Groups Assigned to This Scenario** table, use the check boxes to include () or exclude () groups in the testing of this scenario, then click the **Tag In/Out** button.
 - To exclude contacts, click on a *Group Name* at the **Groups Assigned to This Scenario** table. The contacts assigned to that group are displayed in the **Group Members List**. Use the check boxes to include () or exclude () contacts in the testing of this scenario, then click the **Tag In/Out** button.
- Note:** When testing the scenario, you want to include only those contacts that have device types you want to test (e.g., select contact(s) that have one or more of the following, home phone, cell phone, work phone, answering machine, fax, email address, numeric pager and/or alpha pager).
10. Click the **Message Options** tab.
 11. At the **Message Options** page, create or select a new notification message(s) indicating this is a test.
 12. When changes are complete, click **Activate**. Status information will display at the **View Results** page.
 13. Click **Back to Summary** at the **Quick Actions** menu.

continued...

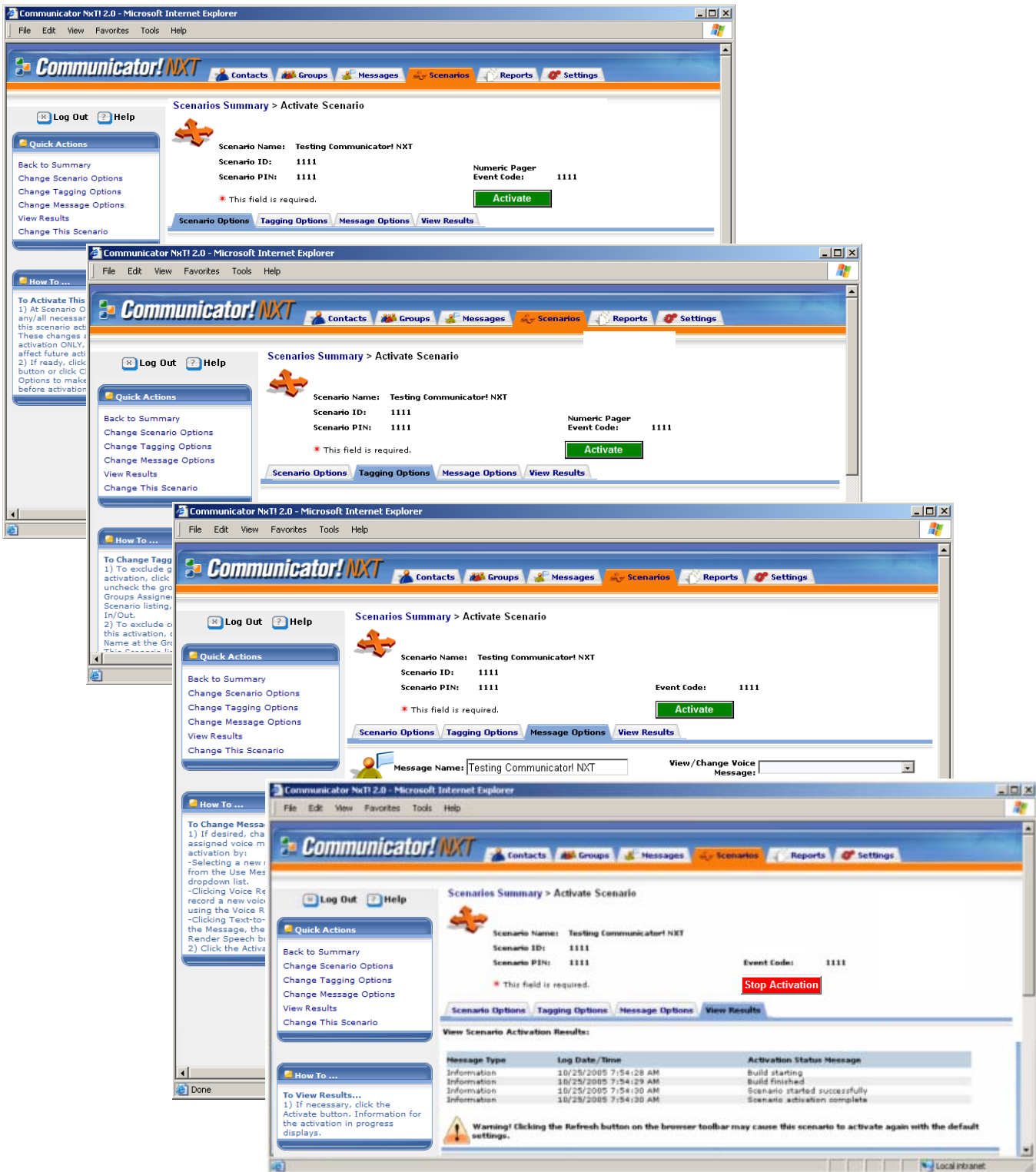


Figure 1: When testing a scenario, you can exclude some groups/contacts prior to activation at the **Tagging Options** page, change the notification message(s) to a “test” message at the **Messages Options** page, and then click **Activate**. This will allow the scenario to run as it would normally during a live activation and allow you to evaluate the results and make corrections as needed.