

Blaser Software

Beau Blaser Software

Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System [B.E.A.M.S.]

Version 2.8.5

Introduction

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For the latest information, please see <http://www.blaser.us/software/beams/>

Abstract

This introduction to the Beau Blaser Software Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System provides a basic understanding of the system, its intent and purpose and the value that can be derived by using the program. In addition, this introduction is designed to provide its audience with the ability to explore the full documentation set in a meaningful context in order to realize maximum benefit when implementing the software.

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Executive Summary

The **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** is the premiere emergency messaging system for Windows computers and networks. This advanced system allows organizations to immediately display an alert message on every powered-on computer with network connectivity. Many seemingly similar systems require that a user be logged-on to the workstation. However, the **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System**'s unique advantage is that it is the only system which runs as a Windows service and has the ability to display alerts on all computers regardless of their logon status.

For more information and to download a fully-functioning demo, please visit the **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** website at <http://www.blaser.us/software/beams/>

Introduction

This document provides the information needed to install and use Beau Blaser Software's **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System**.

Who Should Read This Document

This introduction is intended for audiences who are installing the **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** or make decisions in the planning, development, deployment, or operational aspects of the application in their IT infrastructure. The document aims to educate the audience sufficiently to help determine what value can be derived from the **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** in their environment.

Approach & Design Goals

Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System was designed from the start to be the premiere messaging system for the Windows operating system. **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** is a client/server system that delivers emergency alert messages via computer in an instant. There are three (3) components: the server, the client, and the manager.

The **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** server runs on a single computer that accepts connections from the clients and managers; the **BEAMS** server is the engine that delivers alert messages to all connected clients. The **BEAMS** server runs as a system service so it starts with the operating system. Once the **BEAMS** server is installed and configured, there is not much more you need to do.

The **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** client is installed on all computers in your organization that you wish to receive the emergency alert messages. The client also runs as a system service, which means that once installed and configured, it will connect to the **BEAMS** server at boot-up (provided there is network connectivity) and wait for an alert message to be sent. Upon reception of an alert message from the server, the **BEAMS** client will immediately display the alert message on the primary display of the computer. The unique feature of the **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** is its ability to display alert messages in all of the following cases:

- No one is logged on to the computer (the Ctrl-Alt-Del message is on-screen)
- The workstation is "locked" or otherwise in use
- The screen-saver is running
- A user is logged on and interacting with the computer

The alert will appear in all these cases thereby making it easy for those in-charge to get key information to all individuals near a computer instantly; no waiting, no relying on e-mail.

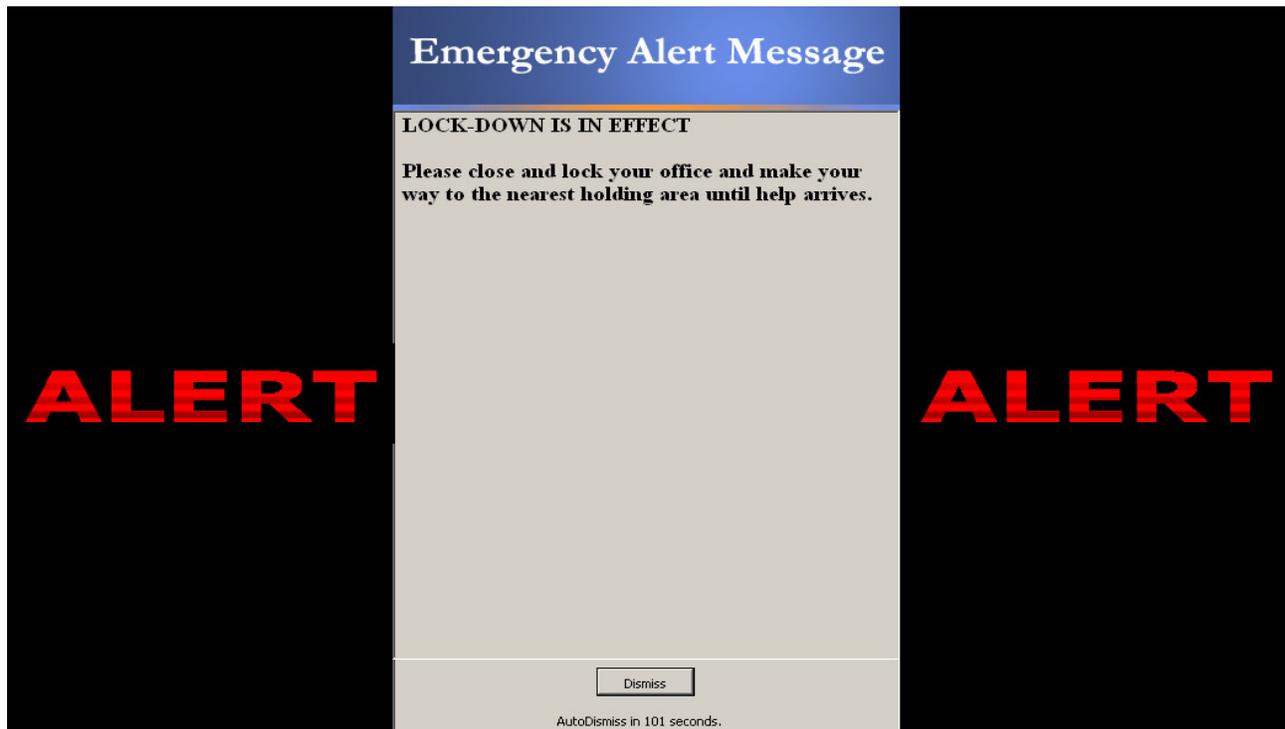
Benefits

The **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** is the only alert system available that offers the rich feature-set of alerts for Windows computers and networks. At many places of business, schools, hospitals, etc., people arrive and may not necessarily sit down and logon to their computer immediately. Perhaps they go for a cup of coffee, or head over to the water cooler, or walk over to chat with a friend. If an emergency strikes, how will you alert these people? An e-mail would only reach those in front of their computer that happen to be checking their e-mail. What if there was a way to broadcast your emergency alert message to **all the computers** at the same time; you would get your message out to everyone, even if they were not logged-in! The **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System's** vivid alert message and attention-getting alert sound will make people aware of a situation as it is unfolding; before it is too late.

End-User Value

End-Users, who have the BEAMS Client installed on their computer, can rest assured that when key information needs to be conveyed, they will get the message no matter what they are doing.

- Install it, configure it, and let it run! The BEAMS Manager has a testing function that you can run to ensure your clients are receiving messages from the server.
- Licensing available in any quantity: as little as one or as many as a site license. Volume licensing pricing can be negotiated via sales@blaser.us



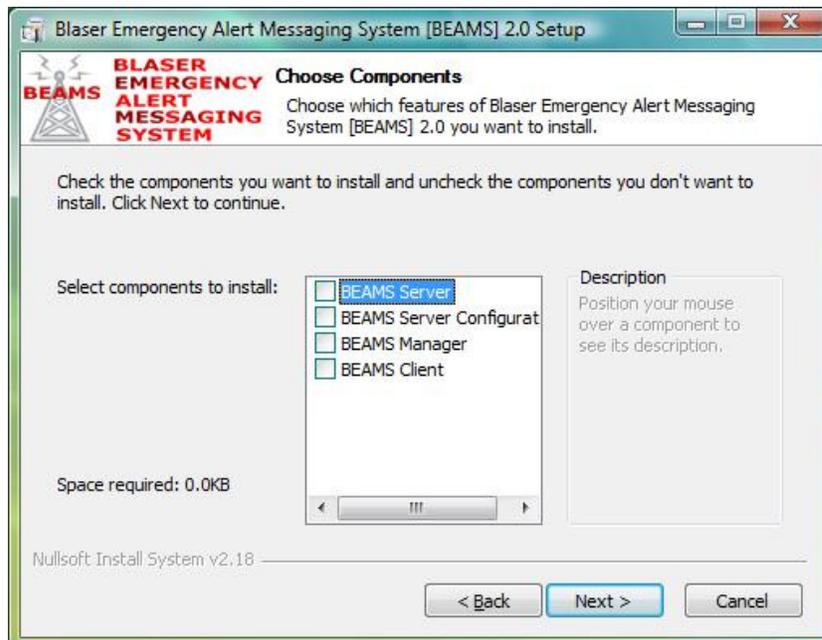
Installation

The steps below will outline the installation and configuration of the Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System.

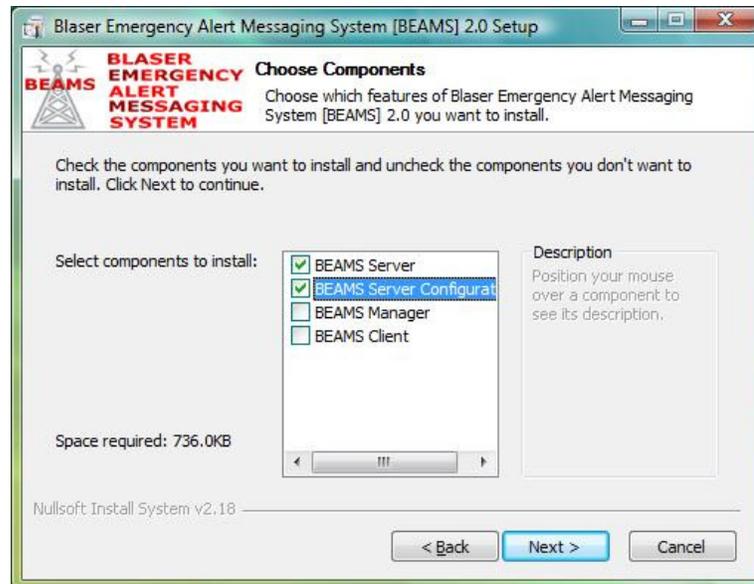
1. Download and execute the Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System (BEAMS) installer.



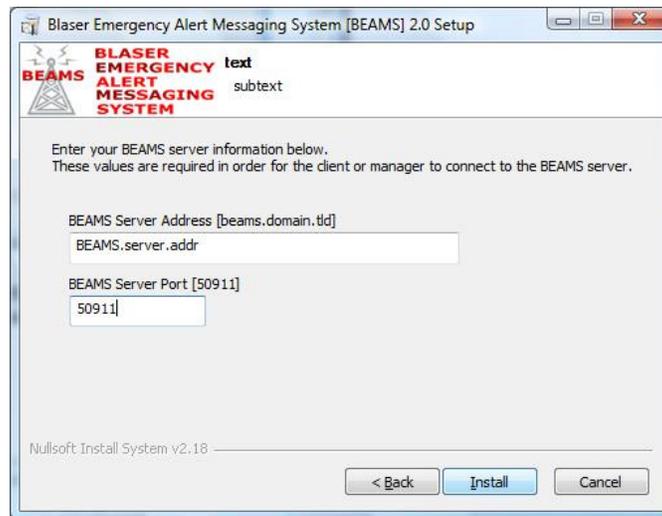
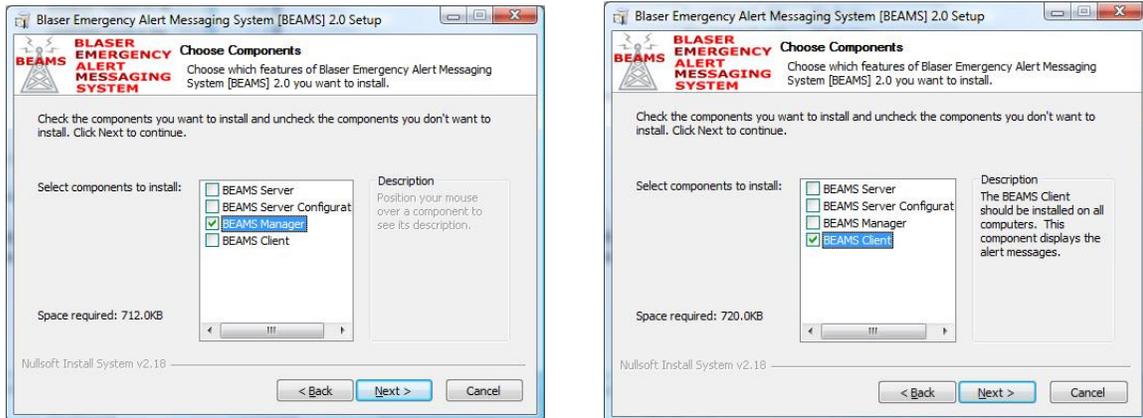
2. Select the components that you wish to install.



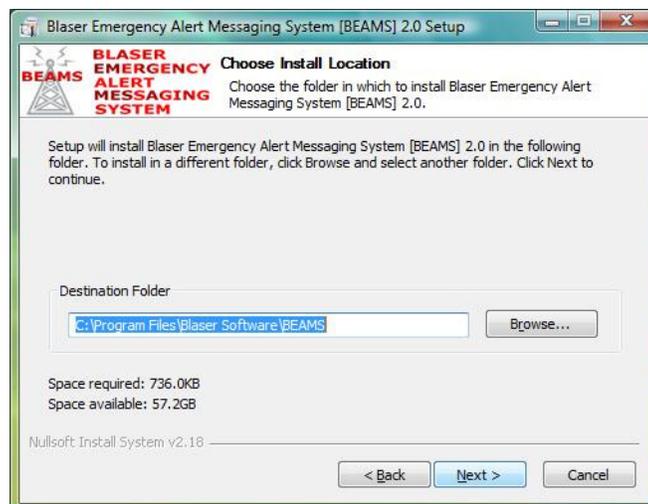
When you install the BEAMS Server, you must also install the BEAMS Server Configurator. This companion application establishes the basic settings of the BEAMS Server.



When you install the BEAMS Client or BEAMS Manager, you will be prompted for the BEAMS Server address and port.

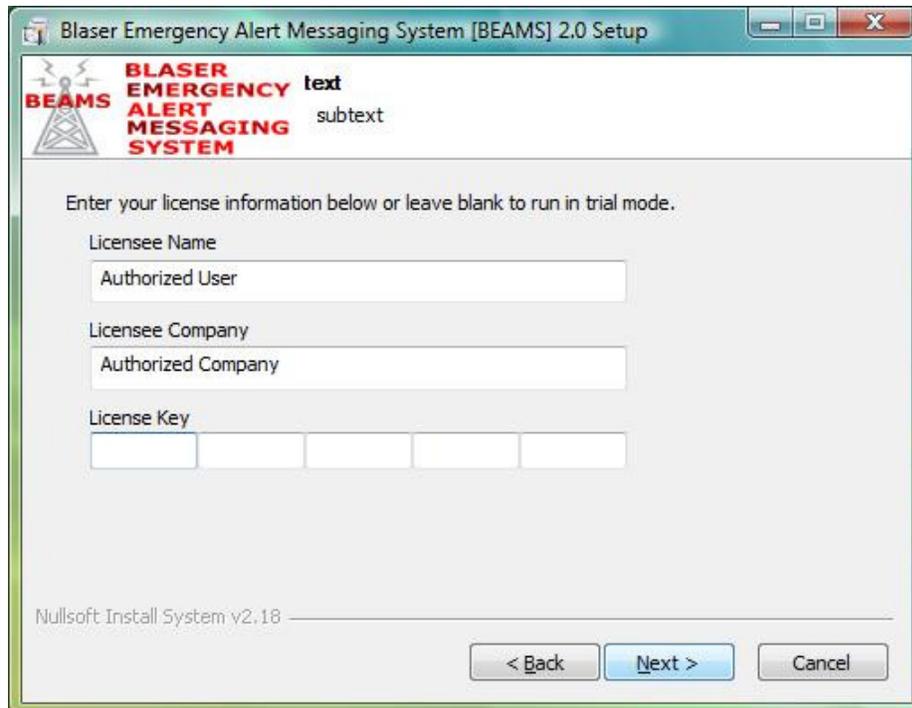


3. Select the path for your installation.

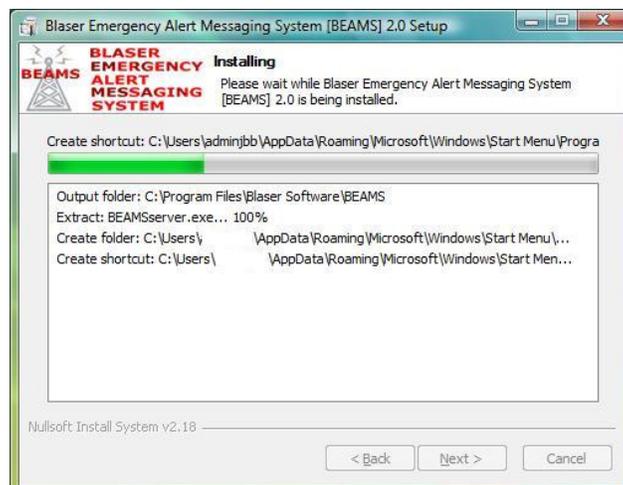


- When you reach the License Information screen, please enter your license information. If you wish to evaluate the software, you may leave this information blank and the Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System will run in trial mode.

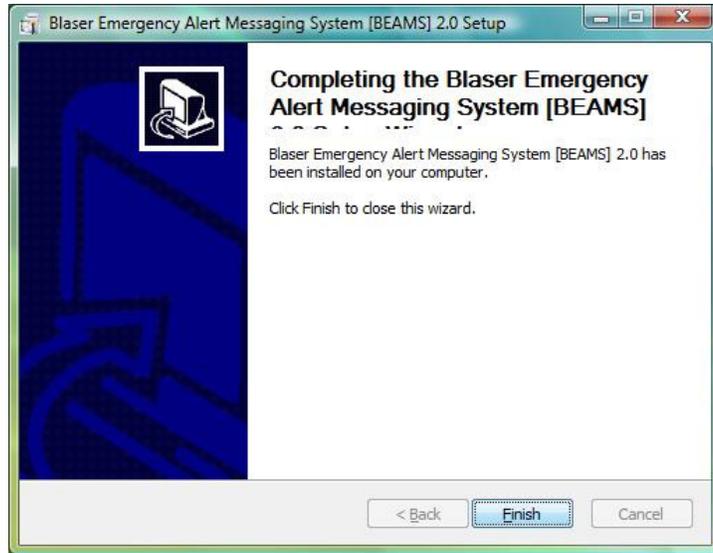
In trial mode, the BEAMS Server is able to accept and communicate with fifty (50) simultaneous clients. This number includes the BEAMS Manager, which for the purposes of client/server connections, also consumes a connection.



- The installer will now copy the files necessary based on the options you selected.



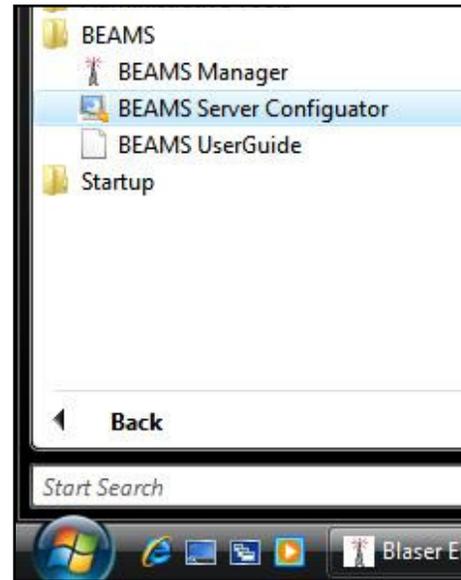
6. After installation has completed, you will need to run the Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System Configurator to configure your options.



Configuration

After installation, begin by configuring your BEAMS server. To do this, start the BEAMS Server Configurator via the Start Menu:

*Start,
All Programs,
BEAMS,
BEAMS Server Configurator*



Credentials

This tab allows you to provide a Manager username and password. Only the BEAMS Manager has the ability to send messages using the BEAMS system. The manager's identity is verified with the credentials provided here.

Manager Credentials

User Name

Enter the user name you wish to use establish for the BEAMS Manager.

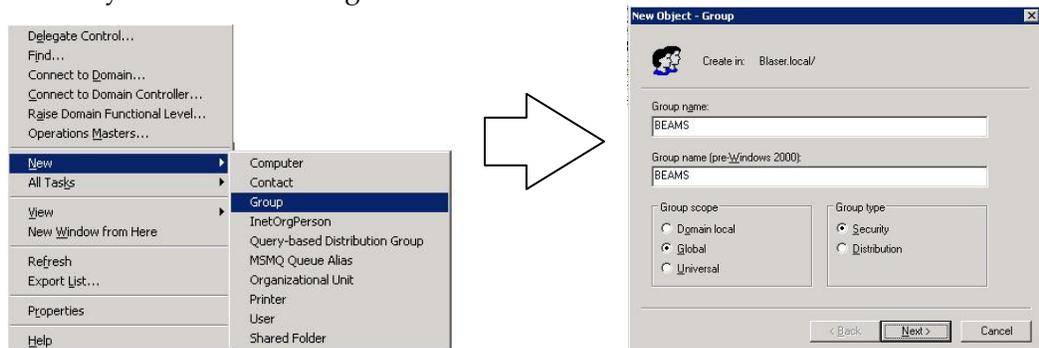
Password

Enter the corresponding password you wish to establish for the BEAMS manager.

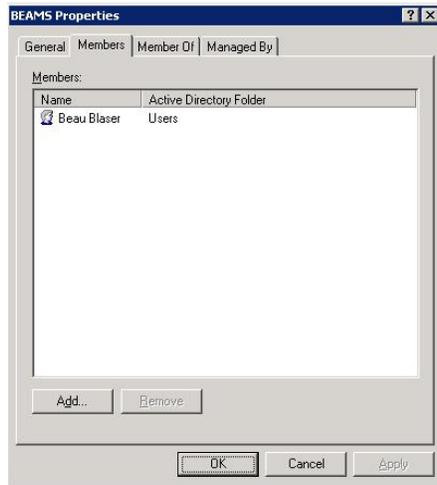
Network Credentials (Optional)

Optionally, to use Network Authentication with a Windows Domain, perform the following steps.

1. In *Active Directory Users and Computers*, create a **Global Security Group** that will contain your BEAMS Managers.



2. Open the new **Global Security Group**, and on the **Members** tab, click the **Add** button to add Active Directory users that will function in the role of a BEAMS Manager.



Enable Network Authentication

This checkbox enables authentication with a Windows Domain.

Domain Name

Enter the Windows Domain that you want to authenticate against.

Group

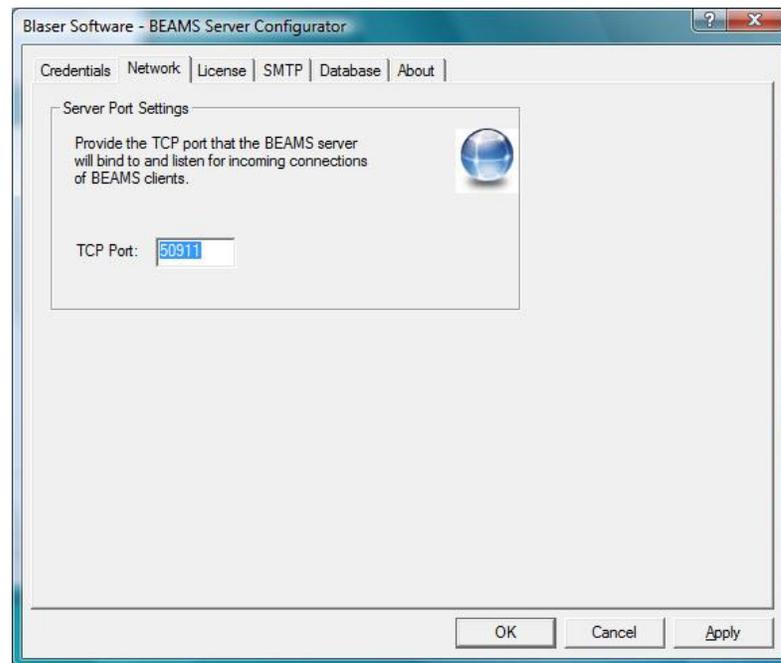
Enter the name of the Global Security Group that you created that BEAMS Managers will possess membership.

Network

TCP Port

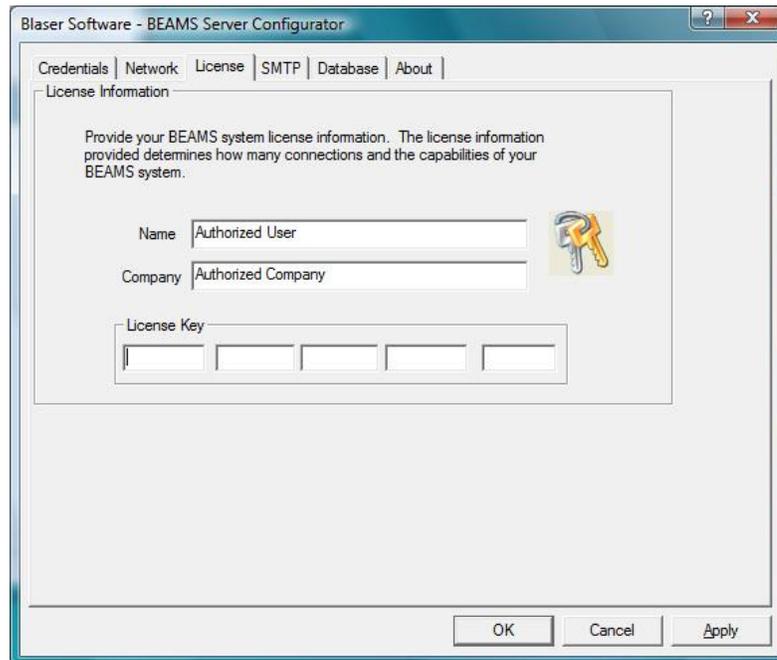
Numeric values only.

Provide the TCP port that the BEAMS server will bind to and listen for incoming connections from the BEAMS clients. You can use any value here that is appropriate for your network environment.



License

On the **License** tab, you can provide your license information. The information provided on this tab determines the capabilities of your BEAMS server, including the number of simultaneous connections you are licensed for.



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Blaser Software - BEAMS Server Configurator' dialog box, specifically the 'License' tab. The dialog has a title bar with a question mark and a close button. Below the title bar are tabs for 'Credentials', 'Network', 'License', 'SMTP', 'Database', and 'About'. The 'License' tab is selected. The main area is titled 'License Information' and contains the following text: 'Provide your BEAMS system license information. The license information provided determines how many connections and the capabilities of your BEAMS system.' Below this text are three input fields: 'Name' with the value 'Authorized User', 'Company' with the value 'Authorized Company', and 'License Key' which is a multi-character input field divided into five boxes. To the right of the 'Name' and 'Company' fields is a small icon of a key. At the bottom of the dialog are three buttons: 'OK', 'Cancel', and 'Apply'.

Name

The name of the licensee.

Company

The name of the company.

License Key

Enter your license key in the boxes provided. BEAMS uses a 25 character alpha-numeric license key.

To purchase a license key, visit <http://www.blaser.us/software/beams/>

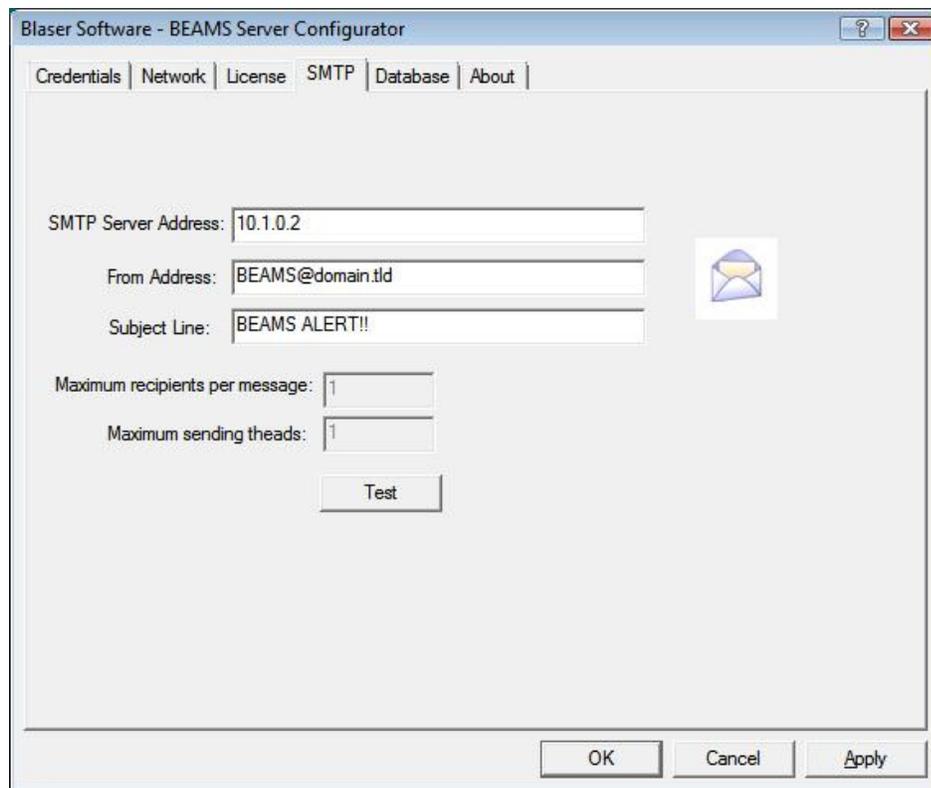
SMTP

The SMTP and database features are optional components not required for the basic workstation alert functionality of BEAMS. The information provided regarding the SMTP e-mail server and database server are necessary as these two subsystems work together to send out e-mail and SMS text message alerts via the BEAMS system. Correct configuration information for your SMTP server and database server is required for this feature to work.

Due to the potential volume of messages that could possibly be sent via BEAMS through your SMTP, it is recommended that you test your configurations thoroughly. In order to balance the need to transmit urgent messages quickly while also being mindful of e-mail server configuration best-practices, you may need to adjust the rules in your SMTP server.

For example, if your SMTP server employs some kind of “rate control” based on sender address, sender IP, etc., or “spam filtering” you will need to make certain that your rules are set such that messages can flow through the SMTP server without delay or being unintentionally flagged as spam.

On the **SMTP** tab, you can supply information about your e-mail server.



The screenshot shows the 'Blaser Software - BEAMS Server Configurator' window with the 'SMTP' tab selected. The window has a tabbed interface with 'Credentials', 'Network', 'License', 'SMTP', 'Database', and 'About' tabs. The SMTP configuration fields are as follows:

- SMTP Server Address: 10.1.0.2
- From Address: BEAMS@domain.tld
- Subject Line: BEAMS ALERT!!
- Maximum recipients per message: 1
- Maximum sending threads: 1

A 'Test' button is located below the 'Maximum sending threads' field. To the right of the 'From Address' and 'Subject Line' fields is an envelope icon. At the bottom of the window are 'OK', 'Cancel', and 'Apply' buttons.

SMTP Server Address:

The address of your SMTP Server

From Address:

The e-mail address you want to appear on the alert e-mail message being sent.

Subject Line:

The subject of the alert e-mail message.

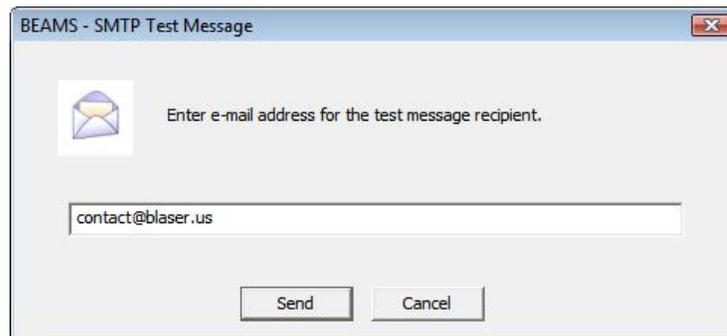
Maximum Recipients Per Message: (Currently Disabled –Feature not yet active)

Maximum Sending Threads (Currently Disabled –Feature not yet active)

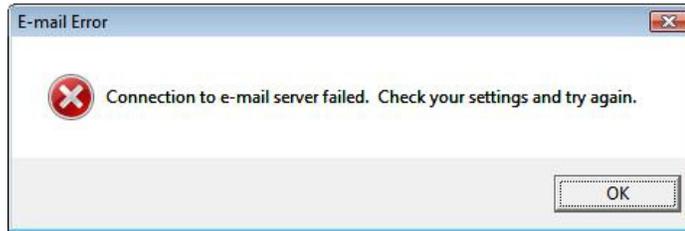
SMTP Testing

After you have supplied the information on the **SMTP** tab, you can send a test message from BEAMS through your e-mail server to ensure the information provided is correct and working. To do his, click the **Test** button.

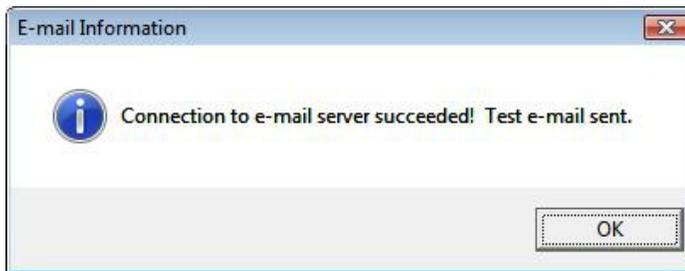
In the **SMTP Test Message** dialog, type in a valid e-mail address and click the **Send** button.



If there is an error with your connection settings, you will see the following message:



If your supplied settings are correct, you will see the following message:



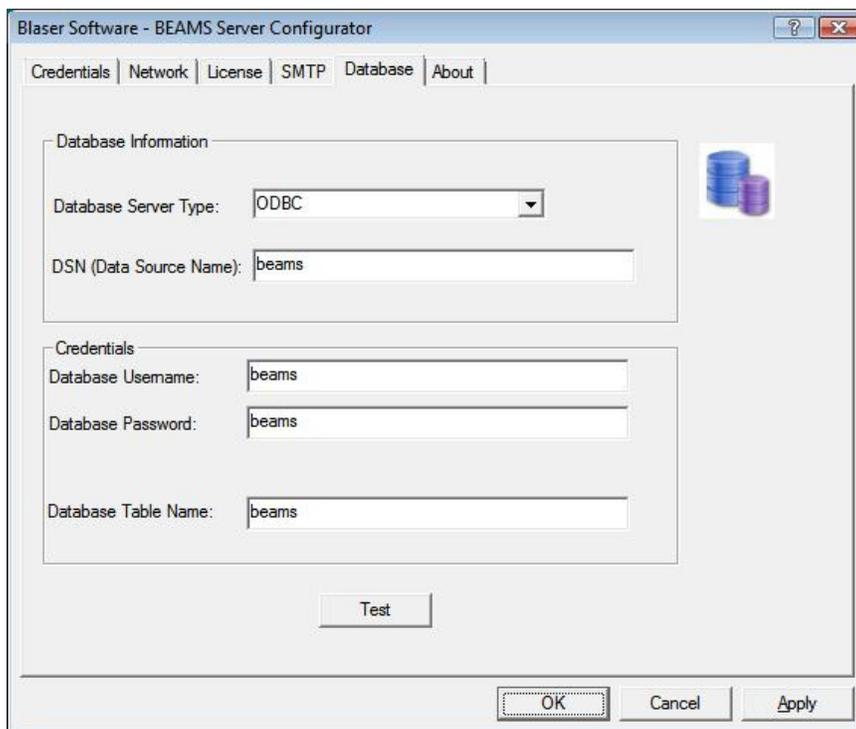
Now, check your e-mail to make sure you received the test message.

Database

The database and SMTP features are optional components not required for the basic workstation alert functionality of BEAMS. The information provided regarding the database server and SMTP e-mail server and is necessary as these two subsystems work together to send out e-mail and SMS text message alerts via the BEAMS system. Correct configuration information for your database server and SMTP server is required for this feature to work.

Contained in the BEAMS Post-Install Pack (available at <http://www.blaser.us/software/beams/>) are sample databases in Microsoft Access format and SQL format that you can use to establish the database structure necessary for SMTP e-mail and SMS text alerts. The database consists of a single table that is used to store the e-mail and SMS addresses. When a BEAMS alert message is broadcast with the **Send e-mail and SMS** checkbox selected, the BEAMS server will connect to the database specified to pull the list of addresses and will subsequently connect to the SMTP server specified to send alerts via this medium as well.

On the **Database** tab, you can provide information about your database server. The database you specify is the persistent storage for e-mail addresses and SMS text recipients. Currently, the BEAMS system only supports ODBC connectivity to databases. This enables you to decide what is best for your organization.



The screenshot shows the 'Blaser Software - BEAMS Server Configurator' window with the 'Database' tab selected. The window has a title bar with a question mark and a close button. The main area is divided into two sections: 'Database Information' and 'Credentials'. In the 'Database Information' section, 'Database Server Type' is set to 'ODBC' in a dropdown menu, and 'DSN (Data Source Name)' is 'beams'. In the 'Credentials' section, 'Database Username', 'Database Password', and 'Database Table Name' are all set to 'beams'. There is a 'Test' button below the credentials section. At the bottom of the window are 'OK', 'Cancel', and 'Apply' buttons. A small icon of a database cylinder is visible in the top right of the main area.

Database Server Type:

The type of database you are using. Currently ODBC is the only available option.

DSN:

The DSN (Data Source Name) established in the ODBC Control Panel.

Database Username:

If required, the username to access the database.

Database Password:

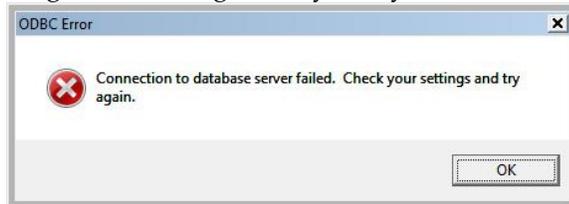
If required, the password to access the database.

Database Table Name:

The table name within the database that houses your data.

After you supply the information on this tab, click the **Apply** button to save these settings. You can now click the **Test** button to ensure communication exists between BEAMS and your database.

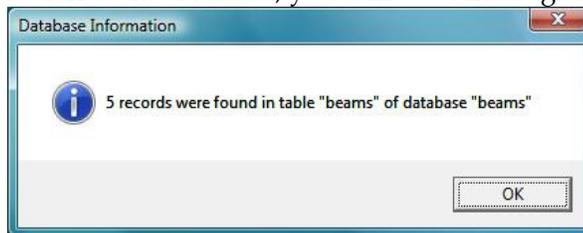
If you see the following error message, verify that your ODBC information is correct.



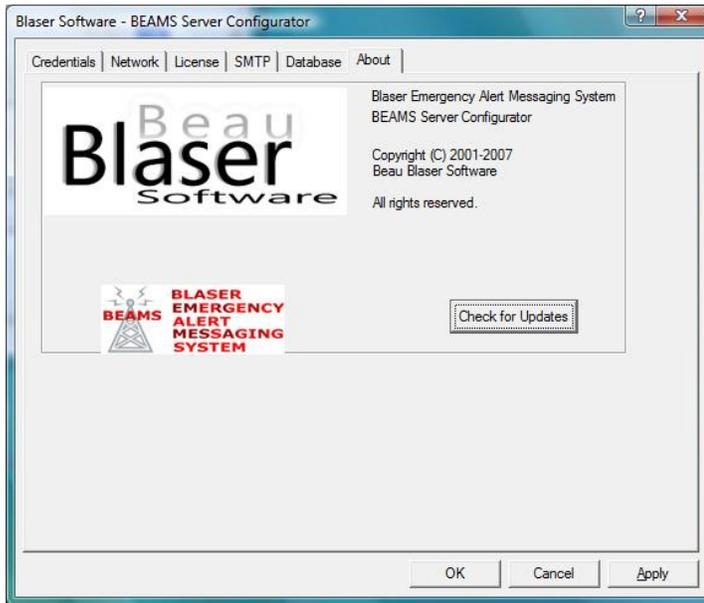
If you see the following error message, your database credentials are correct, but the table name is incorrect.



Upon successful connection to the database, you will see a message similar to the following:

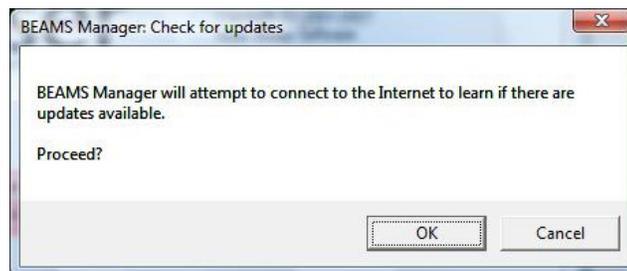


About

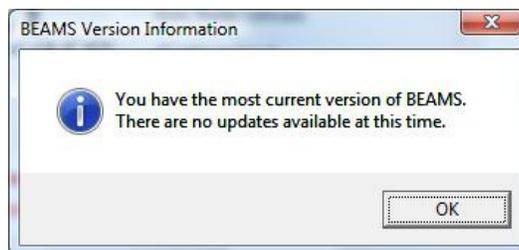


The “About” screen displays some basic information about Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System. In addition, there is a “Check for Updates” button. When clicked, a dialog will ask if it is permissible for BEAMS Configurator to contact the Blaser Software Homepage to see if there are updates available.

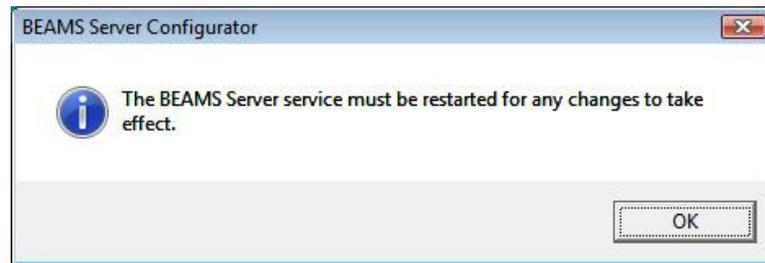
This process simply asks the Blaser Software servers for the CurrentVersion available of BEAMS. No information about your system is transmitted to the Blaser Software servers. Your privacy is our chief concern.



If you are running the most current version of **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** the following dialog will appear.



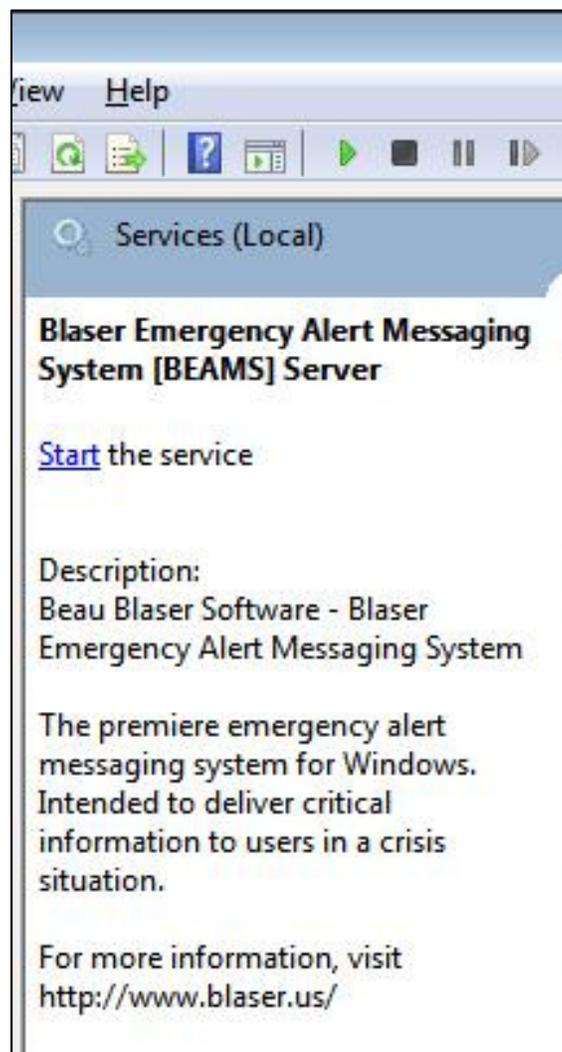
When you have finished establishing your settings, click the **OK** button and you will see the following dialog:



The BEAMS Server loads its settings from the registry at startup. For any new changes to take effect, the BEAMS Server service must be restarted.

To do this, go to: **Control Panel, Administrative Tools, Services**

Find and **Restart** (or **Start** if it is not running) the service named **BEAMS Server**

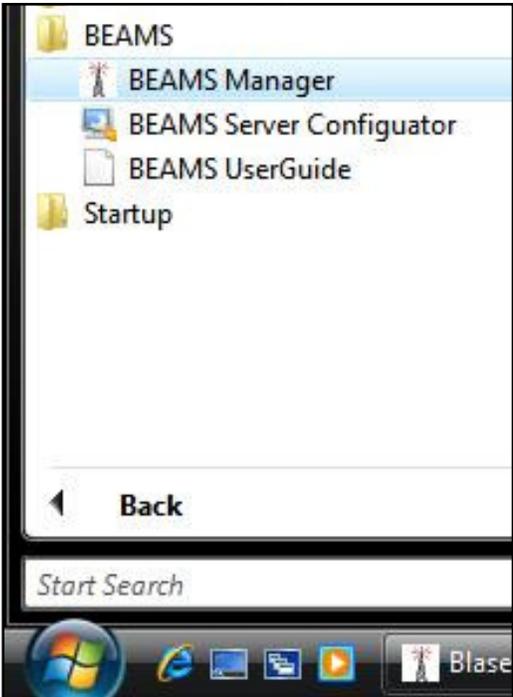


Using the BEAMS Manager

The BEAMS Manager is the only means of sending an alert message. The BEAMS Manager can be installed on as many computers as you like, however they will consume one (1) licensed connection on the server.

To start the BEAMS Manger via the Start Menu, click:

Start, All Programs, BEAMS, BEAMS Manager



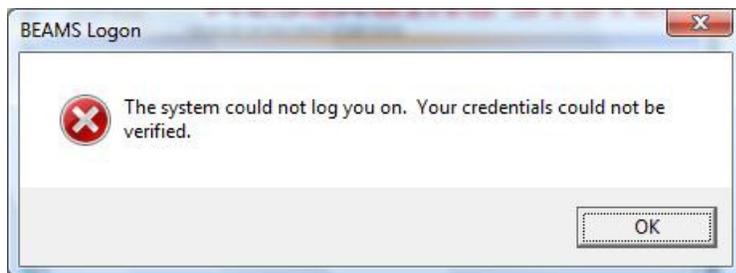
Upon startup, the BEAM Manager will connect to the BEAMS server provided during install and you will be presented with the logon dialog. Provide the user name and password specified in the BEAMS Server Configurator and click **OK**.



If the BEAMS Server is unreachable the following error will be displayed:

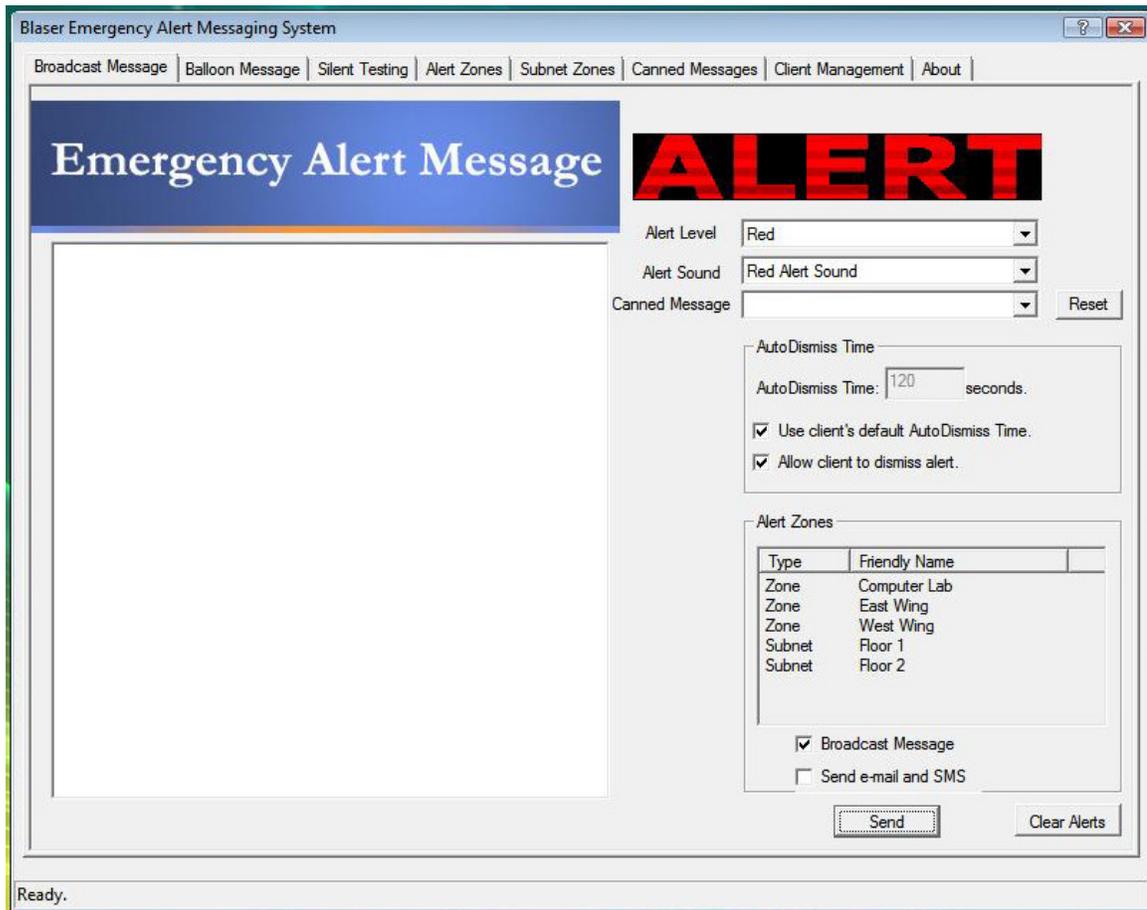


If a connection to the server was established and if the user name and/or password are invalid, the following error will be displayed:



Otherwise, once your credentials are validated by the BEAMS server, you are presented with the main interface of the BEAMS Manager.

Broadcast Message



The **Broadcast Message** tab allows you to send a broadcast alert to all connected clients. A **Broadcast Message** is intended to alert people via the computer no matter what they are doing or the logon state of the computer. Users need not to be logged-on to the computer; the Ctrl + Alt + Del message can be present and the alert message will still display.

The BEAMS Broadcast Alert Message will appear in front of **all** applications and play a corresponding alert sound that will call the attention to the screen.

In the textbox, type in the alert message that you want sent to all connected clients.

Alert Level

Choose an appropriate alert level to accompany the message.

AutoDismiss Time

In seconds. Default AutoDismiss Time is 120 seconds (2 minutes).

The time specified here is the amount of time you want the alert displayed on the client computers. The client will be permitted to dismiss the alert message as well.

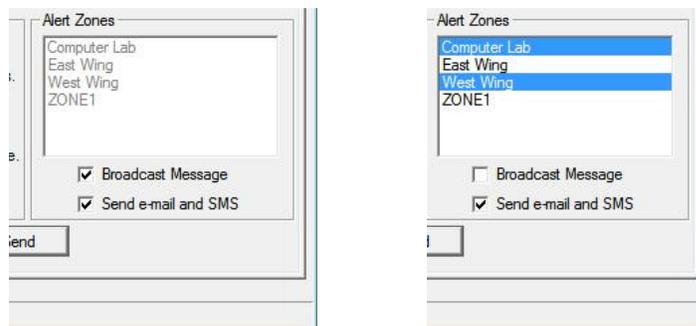
Alert Zones

Select the zones you want to send you message to.

Selecting the **Broadcast Message** checkbox, the message will be sent to every connected client.

Selecting the **Send e-mail and SMS** checkbox will use the database and SMTP settings to send alerts via this mechanism as well.

You can select multiple alert zones by holding the **Ctrl** key while clicking selections.



Balloon Message

Balloon Messages are for non-urgent notifications. These alerts will only reach users that are logged-on to their computers and are working on the desktop. A balloon popup notification will display in the system tray.

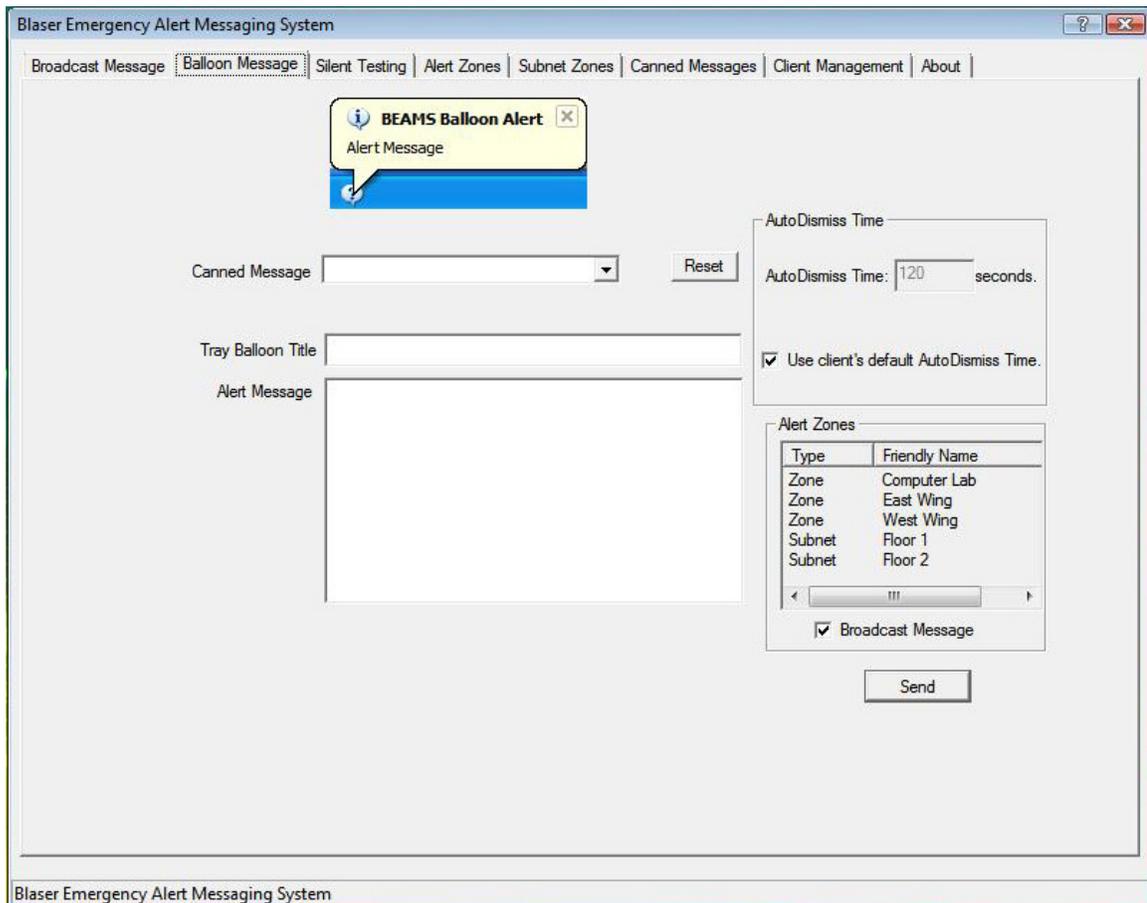
Tray Balloon Title

The title of your balloon message.

Alert Message

The message you wish to be displayed in the balloon.

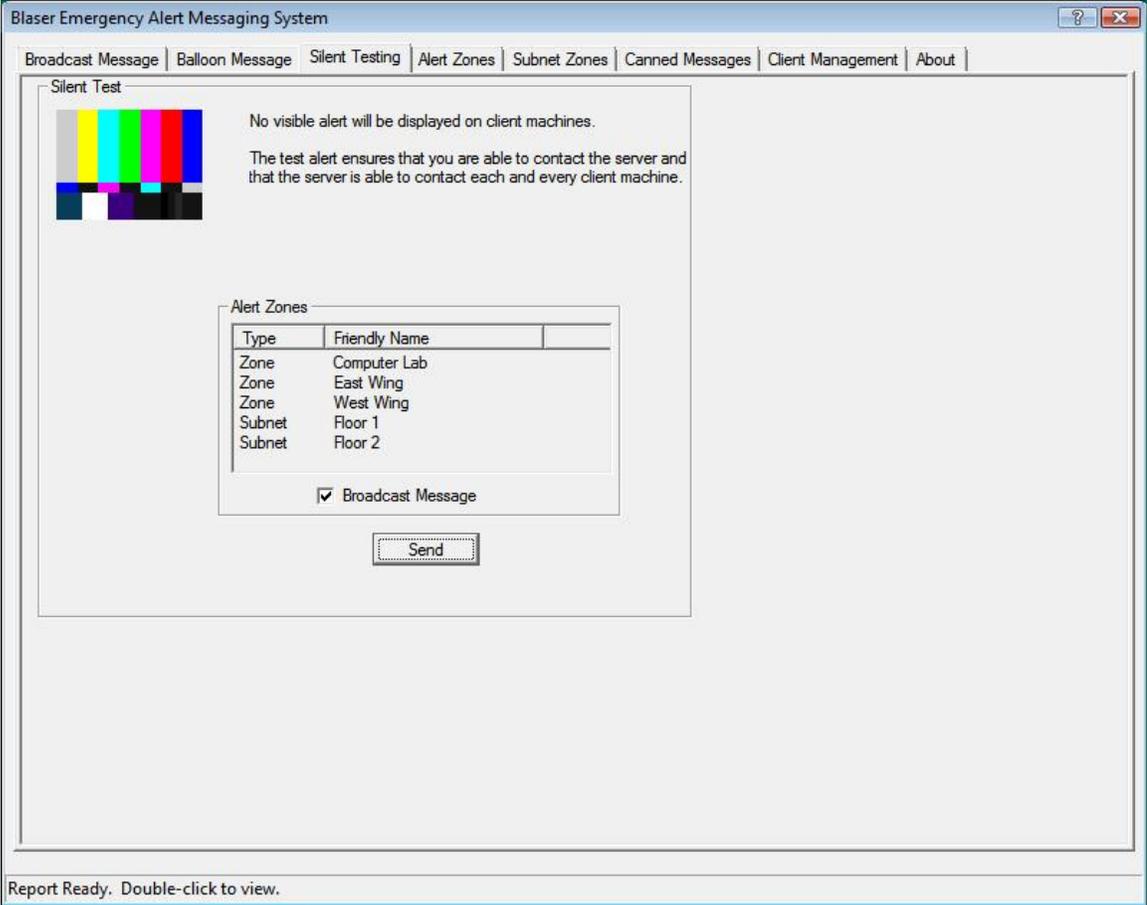
i.e. *"Toilets are clogged on the second floor. Please use facilities on ground floor only this afternoon."*



Silent Testing

The Silent Testing option should be used often. This tab permits the BEAMS Manager to send a simulated message to all clients; essentially it is a “load test” of the system.

The test message is passed to the server which, in turn, broadcasts the message to all clients. The clients respond to notify the server that they have received the test message and the final count of responded clients is returned by the BEAMS Server to the BEAMS Manager that launched the test.



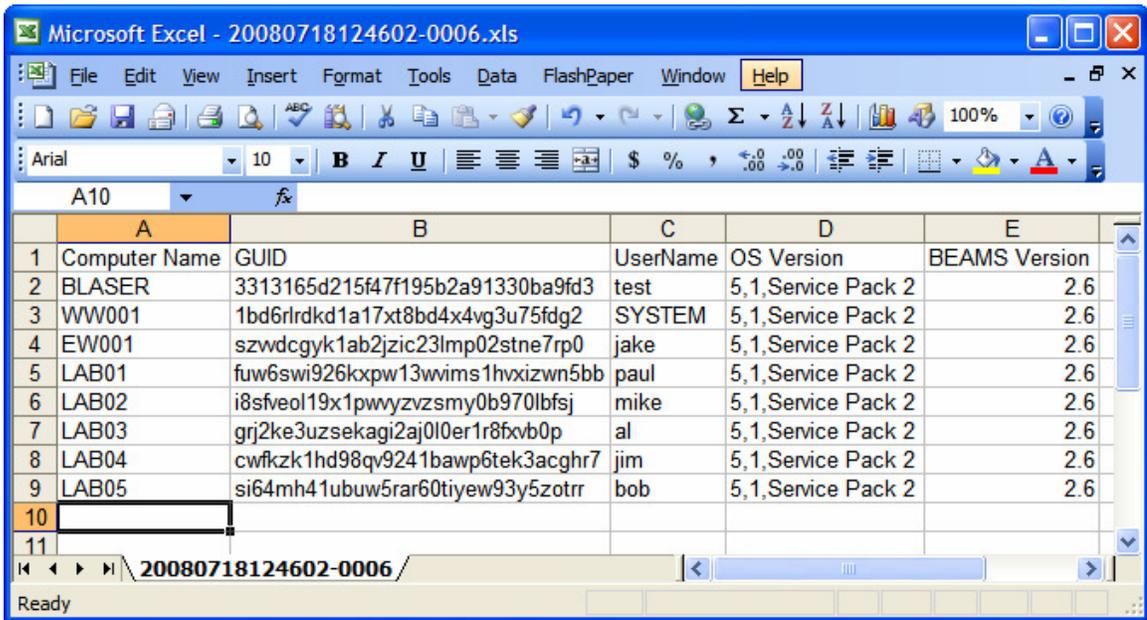
Note the status bar at the bottom: After a message is sent, you can double-click the status bar at the bottom of the manager window to get a status report from the BEAMS Server. The status report will show which computers received the alert and reported back to the BEAMS Server.

The report is saved to the temporary files folder defined by the system variable %TEMP% and contains Tab Separated Values. This type of file displays nicely with Microsoft Excel.

If you do not have Microsoft Excel on your computer, you can navigate to the %TEMP% folder and open the status report with a regular text editor. The file name for the reports follows the following format:

YYYYMMDDHHMMSS-XXXX

YYYY is the 4-digit year, MM is the 2-digit month, DD is the 2-digit day, HH is the 2-digit hour, MM is the 2-digit minute, SS is the 2-digit second in GMT. The final four values XXXX is the number of alert messages sent since the last system reboot.



	A	B	C	D	E
1	Computer Name	GUID	UserName	OS Version	BEAMS Version
2	BLASER	3313165d215f47f195b2a91330ba9fd3	test	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
3	WW001	1bd6rlrdkd1a17xt8bd4x4vg3u75fdg2	SYSTEM	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
4	EW001	szwdcgyk1ab2jzic23lmp02stne7rp0	jake	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
5	LAB01	fuw6swi926kxpw13wims1hvxizwn5bb	paul	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
6	LAB02	i8sfveol19x1pwyzvzsmys0b970lbfsj	mike	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
7	LAB03	grj2ke3uzsekagi2aj0l0er1r8fxb0p	al	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
8	LAB04	cwfkzk1hd98qv9241bawp6tek3acghr7	jim	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
9	LAB05	si64mh41ubuw5rar60tiyew93y5zotrr	bob	5,1,Service Pack 2	2.6
10					
11					

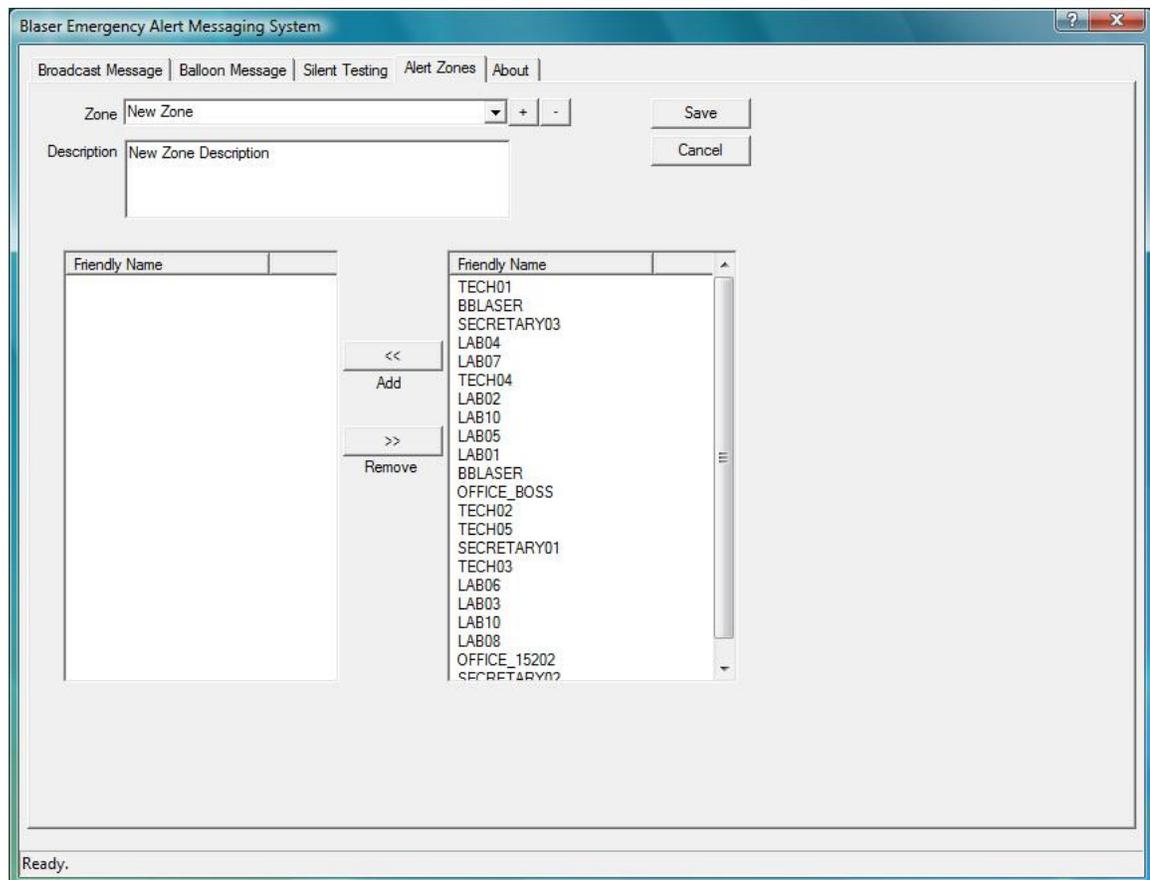
Alert Zones

The **Alert Zones** tab allows you to set up and manage zones of computers. With the advent of the **Alert Zones** feature, you can segment alert message delivery to one or multiple zones.

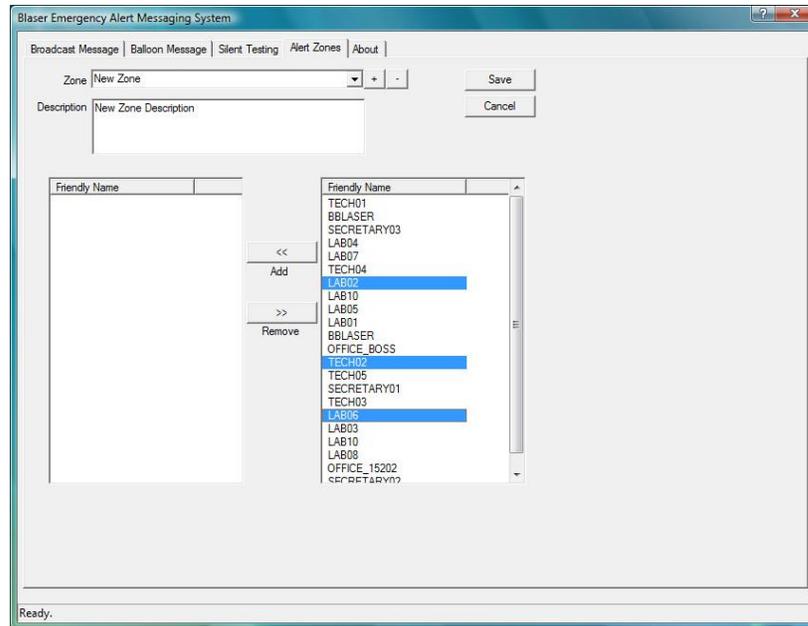
Computers can be members of any number of zones.

To create a zone, follow these steps:

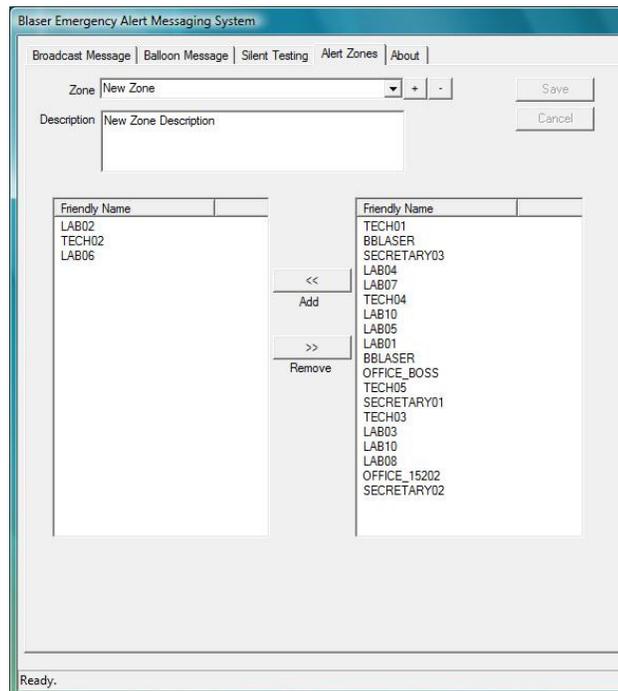
1. In the **Zone** text field, type a name for your new zone.
2. In the **Description** field, type a description for your zone.
3. Click the **+** icon to add the zone.
4. From the right column, select computers that you want to be members of this zone.
5. Click the **Add** button to add them to the new zone.
6. Click **Save** to save your new zone to the BEAMS Server.



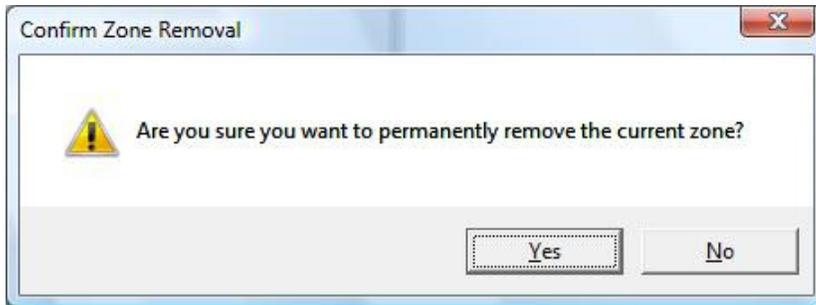
You can select more than one computer at the same time by holding the **Ctrl** key while selecting them in the list.



Clicking the **Add** button adds the selected computers.



Clicking the – button will delete the currently selected zone. When you click the – button, you are then prompted for confirmation.



Clicking **Yes** will permanently delete the zone.

Subnet Zones

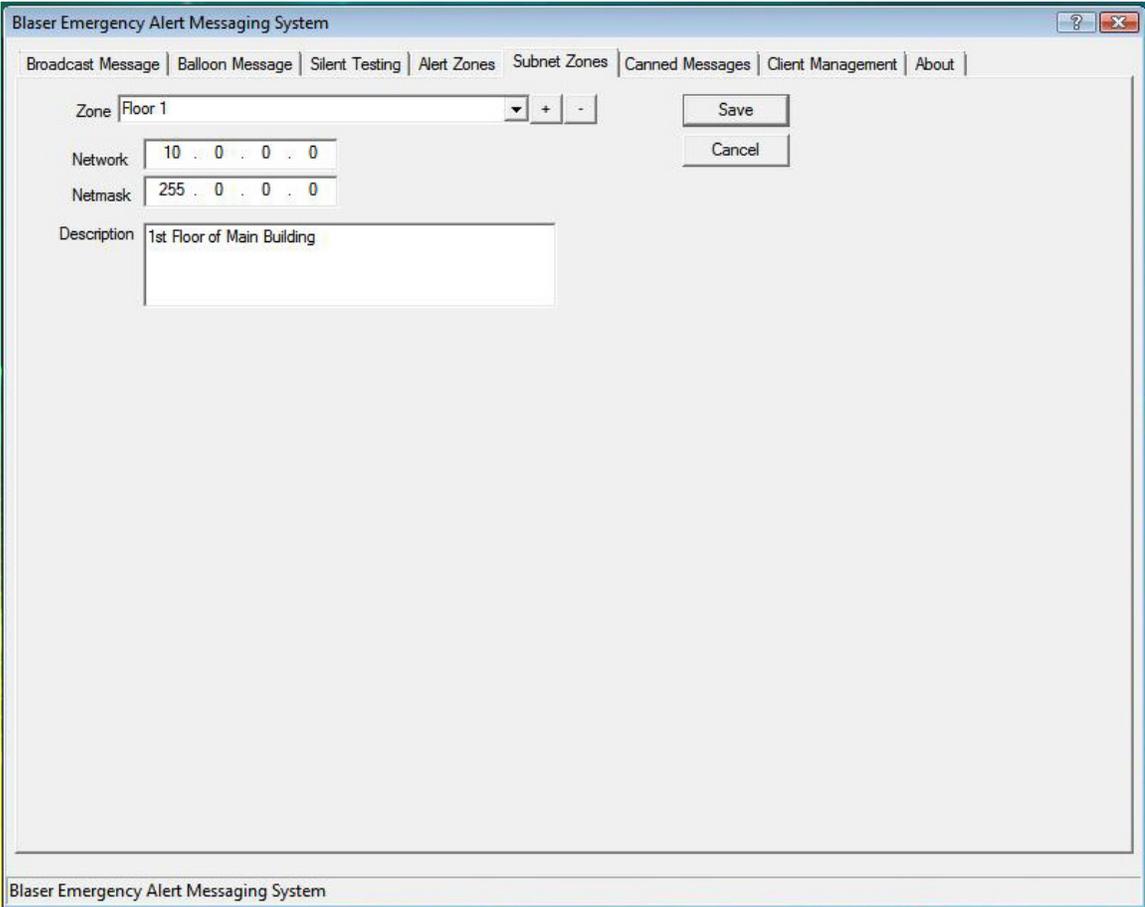
The **Subnet Zones** tab allows you to set up and manage zones of computers by IP Address and Network Mask. The functionality of adding, saving, and deleting **Subnet Zones** is the same as the previous section **Alert Zones**.

Network

Specify the network address of the subnet you want to create a zone for.

Netmask

Specify the network mask of the subnet you want to create a zone for.



Sending Alerts

Anytime the BEAMS Manager sends an alert (Broadcast, Balloon or Silent Test), a confirmation dialog will display before the message is relayed to the BEAMS Server.



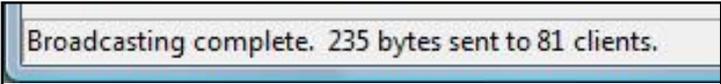
If you realize an error or decide you did not want to send a broadcast message, click **No** to cancel sending the message.



If you click **Yes** the broadcast message is sent to all clients via the BEAMS Server and the following message is displayed:



After broadcasting is complete, check the status bar to see how many clients received the message:



Summary

The goal of **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** is to enable an organization with a means of notifying individuals in their organizations instantly when it becomes necessary. Companies, schools, hospitals, municipalities and many others need a way to alert people of unfolding situations immediately...BEAMS has the ability to get the message out in a timely fashion and in a way which doesn't rely on people checking for messages, like e-mail.

We encourage you to download a fully-functioning demo of the **Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System** and try it for yourself. If you have suggestions that would improve the product, or requirements that you need in the product that would make you purchase it, let us know!

Beau Blaser Software is committed to making software that is easy to install, configure and use; and software that is useful! All of our products are coded in C++ using documented standards. Our code is clean (not messy) and we pride ourselves on robust and efficient products that are fast and easy to setup and use.

References

Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System program information and available details can be found at:

<http://www.blaser.us/software/beams/>

For feedback and information, send e-mail to:

contact@blaser.us

A few words from Beau...

I hope you like the Blaser Emergency Alert Messaging System. I started creating it around the year 2000 as an instant messaging system. After the events of September 11, 2001, the focus of the application changed. It has evolved over the past few years to be the premiere emergency alert messaging system for Windows computer and networks.

While my little company is small and new, it is my goal is to develop and deliver software that is of the highest quality (and at least slightly innovative). Feedback, criticism, advice and comments are all things that I want! The only way for the products to improve and become more useful is for people to let me know if I'm achieving my goal. I invite you to send me an e-mail and let me know what you think.

Sincerely,

Beau