



Weekly Safety Meeting

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs)

In the United States, alerting authorities such as the National Weather Service, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the President of the United States can issue a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) to the public. Short emergency messages called Wireless Emergency Alerts can be sent from these authorized senders to compatible cell phones whose users have the alert settings turned on. Government alerts include National Alerts, AMBER Alerts for missing children, Emergency Alerts, Public Safety Messages, Test Alerts, and Imminent Threat Alerts such as tornado and flood warnings. Some police departments are adding what are called “Silver alerts” for missing elderly people.

Users with alerts enabled in target areas where there is an emergency should receive alerts broadcast from towers in and around the affected area. These alerts will sound like a series of high-pitched beeps and simultaneous phone vibration. Although these alerts may wake you up, emergency responders agree that the critical information these alerts convey is of high enough importance to send the message anyway.

How to Enable Alerts

To see what alerts you have enabled on your mobile phone, look under the “settings” and then “notifications.” If you don’t see any alert notification options, look up the specific model of your phone or call your wireless provider to ask. WEAs look like text messages, but there is no charge for them by your cell phone provider because they are legally required to provide the messages as a public service.

What Happens without Warnings

The last thing anyone wants is to be caught off guard because the authorized sender does not send notifications in time. Around July 4, 2025 in Kerrville, TX, there was devastating flooding along the Guadalupe River. The National Weather Service had issued several watches and warnings, and at 1:15am the first cell phone flood warning alert was pushed out. There was not Code Red system in place. A Code Red system works in conjunction with FEMA’s Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS). Alerts did not go out for hours or days in some cases. However, also, many people in the flood zone area could have turned off notifications and there were no civil defense sirens to alert people near the river of a flash flood emergency. There are many bills being proposed now in Texas to create a safer emergency alert system, including website alerts, sirens and systems, and mobile alerts that would override notifications that are turned off.

Similarly, about a year ago, in the case of Hurricane Helene hitting Asheville, NC, emergency alerts were not sent out soon enough in some places. Damage had already occurred, impacting cell phone towers and the power supply to local alert systems, so some critical evacuation warnings were not sent due to lack of backup power systems. Asheville learned that backup systems for emergency alerts are needed in place before an emergency occurs. Once Hurricane Helene wiped out houses and businesses in the flood areas, the emergency responders did not have backup systems for emergency communication. Starlink systems were provided ASAP as a backup internet system for communication. Local governments should have systems like these readily available to first responders and businesses to operate after a disaster. Ham Radio operation or CB Operators are still needed to communicate important emergency response information.

Other Types of Alerts

State law mandates that cell phone carriers permit WEAs, but there are also legal permissions granted for TV, radio, satellite, and social media alerts. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a warning system that uses TV, radio, and satellite TV and audio to send public service alerts. FEMA and the FCC are authorized to send national-level alerts through the EAS.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has a weather radio broadcast called an “All Hazards” radio network that you can tune into for continuous weather information. The National Weather Radio (NWR) is a network of radio stations that have transmitter/receiver towers across the US. You can purchase a NOAA weather radio that is powered by hand cranking, solar panels, or batteries to make sure you have access to this information during a critical emergency where power is lost.

DON'T BE CAUGHT OFFGUARD...ENABLE MOBILE EMERGENCY ALERTS!

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

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