WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS

Build a kit.
Make a plan.
Be aware.

What are Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs)?

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) are used to send concise, text-like messages to WEA-capable mobile devices during emergency situations. WEAs are sent by your state and local public safety officials, the National Weather Service, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the President of the United States.

Types of Alerts

Presidential

Alerts issued by the President or a designee during a national emergency.

Imminent Threat

Alerts issued when an imminent threat to life or property exists in your area, including man-made or natural disasters such as flash floods and tornadoes.

Amber

Alerts issued to help law enforcement search for and locate an abducted child.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I'm able to receive WEA messages?
More than 100 wireless providers, including all of the largest carriers, have WEA-capable devices. WEA-capable phones first became available in April 2012, but many mobile devices, especially older ones, are not WEA-capable. If you purchase a new mobile device, it will probably be able to receive WEA messages. Check with your mobile carrier to determine if your device is capable of receiving WEA alerts.

Do I need to sign up to receive WEA messages?
No. WEA messages are sent automatically to WEA-capable phones through participating carriers in a specific threat area.

Will I be charged for receiving WEA messages?
No. This service is offered for free through wireless carriers. WEA messages will not count toward your texting limits on your wireless plan.

What should I do if I receive a WEA message?
Follow any action advised by the message. Look for more information from local authorities or the media.

Will a WEA message interrupt my phone conversations?
No. The alert will be delayed until you finish your call.

Does WEA know where I am? Is it tracking me?
No. WEAs are broadcast from cell towers to mobile devices in the area of the threat. Every WEA-capable phone within range receives the message. WEA, like TV and radio stations, doesn't know who is tuned in.

How often will I receive WEA messages?
You may get very few WEA messages, or you may receive frequent messages if conditions change during an emergency. The number depends on the number of imminent threats to life or property in your area.

If, during an emergency, I can't make or receive calls or text messages due to network congestion, will I still be able to receive a WEA message?
Yes, WEA messages are not affected by network congestion.

What if I don't want to receive WEA messages?
Although it is not recommended, you can opt out of receiving WEA messages for imminent threats and AMBER alerts, but not for Presidential messages. To opt out, adjust the settings on your mobile device.

What if I travel into a threat area after a WEA message has already been sent out?
If the threat is still active, your WEA-capable device will receive the message when you enter the area.

Is this the same service public safety agencies have asked the public to register for?
No, but the messaging is complementary. Local agencies may ask the public to sign up to receive telephone calls, text messages, or emails. Those messages often include specific details about a critical event. WEAs are very short messages designed to get your attention in a critical situation. They may not give all the details that you receive from other services, like Alert Iowa.