HM Government

Emergency Alerts factsheet

What are Emergency Alerts?

The new Emergency Alerts service will enable people to be contacted via their mobile phone if their lives are at risk in an emergency. The service will be used to warn you about life-threatening emergencies such as severe flooding or terror attacks.

What will the alert look and sound like?

An Emergency Alert looks and sounds very different to other types of messages such as SMS 'text messages'. You'll know if you get an Emergency Alert because you'll hear a loud, siren-like sound and your phone will use a distinct vibration. A message will appear on your screen until you acknowledge it.

What is the purpose of the test alert?

To ensure the Emergency Alerts system works effectively, the government will be carrying out a series of tests. Following a successful test in East Suffolk on 25 May, the second test will take place in Reading on 29 June between 1pm and 2pm.

How can I find an Emergency Alert on my phone after I've acknowledged it?

If you received an Emergency Alert on a compatible phone, you may still be able to view it on your phone after you have acknowledged it. On Android phones, the alert may be found in the Messages app or 'Emergency Alert History'. For iPhone users, the alert will be in your notifications. You can access your notifications by swiping down from the top of your screen. If you delete your notifications, the alert will also be deleted.

How do they work?

Emergency Alerts are sent to compatible 4G and 5G mobile phones within an area of risk. They don't need your location or phone number. Only the government and emergency services can send them.

Will I still receive an alert if I have an old phone?

Emergency Alerts are sent to compatible 4G and 5G mobile phones within an area of risk, if they have the latest software update. Mobile phones released before 2015 are likely to require some changes to the settings.

What if I don't own a mobile phone or my phone can't receive Emergency Alerts?

Emergency Alerts are just one of many tools the government has to communicate with the public about emergency situations. Those without a mobile will still be made aware, e.g. through the media and local emergency services.

As part of the public information campaign, we are working closely with community leaders and stakeholders to ensure that the communities and people who are less likely to have a mobile will be able to access the information distributed through the alerts. If you can, we also advise you to identify someone living nearby who can inform you of any Emergency Alerts being sent.

Can I opt out?

Emergency Alerts use several channels and the ability to opt in or out is determined by the channel type. However, we strongly recommend that people do not opt out of the service, as it is intended to warn you when lives are in danger.

I didn't receive an alert – is there a way I can check if I have a compatible phone?

To check if you have a compatible phone, follow these instructions depending on what phone you have.

- iPhones: Settings > Select Notifications > Make sure the 'Emergency Alerts' toggle is on.
  - Samsung phones:
  - Android 11: Settings > Search for 'Emergency Alerts' OR Settings > Notifications > Advanced Settings > Emergency Alerts
  - Android 10 and older OS versions: Messages app > Settings > Emergency Alert settings > Emergency Alerts
- Other Android phones: Generally the settings can be found through one of the following ways,
  - Settings > Sounds > Advanced > Emergency Broadcasts
  - Settings > Wireless & Networks > More > Cell Broadcasts
  - Settings > General Settings > Emergency Alerts

  Text message app > Message Settings > Emergency Alert Settings

Individual phones may vary, depending on which software version a customer is on. Your alert settings may be called a number of different names including: Emergency Alerts, emergency broadcasts, extreme threats or severe threats.

What is the difference between SMS and Emergency Alerts?

After the alert is sent by the government or emergency services, the message will be received on a mobile phone within about 4 to 10 seconds. In comparison, the delivery of SMS messages can take up to 48hrs. This is critical in emergencies. Emergency Alerts are one-way and no personal information is required, whereas an SMS message requires a phone number.

How will I know that the alert is genuine and not a scam?

An Emergency Alert looks and sounds very different to other types of messages such as SMS 'text messages'. You'll know if you get an Emergency Alert because you'll hear a loud, siren-like sound and your phone will use a distinct vibration. You have to acknowledge them before you can use your phone's other features. They appear as a notification and will include a link to **gov.uk/alerts,** where you'll also be able to check that an alert is genuine.

If you receive an alert but are still in doubt about the origins of the message, go to gov.uk/alerts or contact neighbours, friends or family in the nearby area to check whether they have received it too.

I am visually or hearing impaired. Will I know when I receive an Emergency Alert?

Yes. Emergency Alerts are designed to attract attention. This means compatible phones use a loud, siren-like sound so people with visual impairments are not excluded. Depending on your phone's features, the alert will work with screen magnification and may read the message out for you having also overridden volume settings. The unique noise emitted by the phone should also be audible for those who use a hearing aid.

What should I do when I receive an Emergency Alert?

Following a successful test in East Suffolk on 25 May, the second test will take place in Reading on 29 June between 1pm and 2pm. Should this test prove successful, the capability will be made available for use across the whole of the UK later this year.
A message will appear on your screen until you acknowledge it. You won't need to do anything on this occasion, it's only a test. In future, the system will warn people when lives are in danger. The alert will give you clear instructions of what to do to stay safe.

What should I do if I receive a message while driving?

You MUST NOT hold a mobile phone while driving or riding a motorcycle. It is illegal to do so. You must have hands-free access such as voice command, a dashboard holder or mat, or a windscreen mount and the device must not block the driver's view of the road or the traffic. You should not read or otherwise respond to an Emergency Alert while driving or riding a motorcycle.

Please be aware, the alert will appear on your device for 20 seconds and you will hear a loud, siren-like sound for up to 10 seconds.

If you are driving, you should continue to drive and not respond to the noise or attempt to pick up the mobile phone to deal with the message. Find somewhere safe and legal to stop before reading the message. If there is nowhere safe or legal to stop close by, and nobody else in the vehicle to read the alert, tune into live radio and wait for bulletins until you can find somewhere safe and legal to stop.

You must stay in full control of your vehicle at all times. The police can stop you if they think you are not in control because you are distracted and you can be prosecuted. The law still applies if you are stopped at traffic lights, queuing in traffic or supervising a learner driver. You can, however, use a hand-held mobile phone if either you are safely parked or need to call 999 or 112 in an emergency and it is unsafe or impractical to stop.

What other ways will you use to alert people of an emergency?

Emergency Alerts are just one of many tools the government has to communicate with the public about emergency situations, e.g. through the media, community organisations and local emergency services.

Each region across the country also has a Local Resilience Forum in place, made up of local authorities, the emergency services, the NHS & health bodies and environment-related government agencies, set up to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency. Local Resilience Forums work with partners in a local area to alert people of an emergency.

I work with/am a parent of/am a carer of a person who may be distressed by this type of alert. How has this been taken into consideration?

As part of the public information campaign, we are working closely with community leaders and stakeholders to ensure that the communities and people who are more likely to be distressed by this type of alert are made aware of the Emergency Alert service, and the planned test. If you can, we also advise you to identify vulnerable people living nearby who you can inform of the planned test.

Those who are more vulnerable can also be directed to the website **(gov.uk/alerts)** for more information about Emergency Alerts, including what happens when you get an alert, reasons you might receive one and how it works. There is also an explainer video they can watch to find out more.

If I want to know more about the alert system, where can I go for more information?

For more information about Emergency Alerts, including what happens when you get an alert, reasons you might receive one and how it works, visit **gov.uk/alerts.** There is also an explainer video you can watch on the website to find out more.

HM Government

Look out for testing of Emergency Alerts

Reading
15 June, 1pm

Our new way to warn you when lives are in danger

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