

# Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

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## What are Wireless Emergency Alerts?

- Wireless Emergency Alerts, or WEAs, are free messages sent directly to your cellular phone, warning you about severe weather, AMBER Alerts and threats to safety in your area.
- WEAs are sent to you by your state and local public safety officials, the National Weather Service, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the President.
- WEAs began in 2012 and should already be on your cellular phone or other wireless device.
- WEAs are no more than 360 characters and will provide brief critical information about a threat in your location or an AMBER emergency.
- The WEA notification is designed to get your attention and alert you with a unique sound and vibration.
- WEAs resemble a text message on your cellular phone – but WEAs will not interrupt calls in progress.
- WEA messages allow alerts to be sent to cellular phones in a geographically targeted affected area.
- WEAs are one-way alerts to any cell phones in range of the cell tower, which ensures that authorities cannot collect any data from an individual.
- WEAs are not affected by network congestion.
- Wireless customers will not be charged for the delivery of WEA messages.

## Unique Sound & Vibration

- The unique sound and vibration (Common Audio Attention Signal and Vibration Pattern) you receive when a WEA is sent are prescribed in Part 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations for use in Alert messaging only.
- The unique sound and vibration cadence are particularly helpful to people with visual or hearing disabilities.

## Will I Receive WEAs on My Cell Phone?

- To find out if your phone can receive WEA alerts, contact your wireless provider. All the major providers participate in WEA on a voluntary basis. It will take time for upgrades in infrastructure, coverage and handset technology to allow WEA enhancements to reach all cellular customers.
- Wireless providers are selling devices with WEA capability included but not all handsets now on the market can receive WEAs. To learn how yours is configured, contact your wireless provider or phone manufacturer.
- WEA messages can save lives. Do not ignore these messages! WEAs contain basic information so if you receive a WEA, seek additional information from other sources such as radio or TV.

For more information visit <https://www.fema.gov/ipaws>. Contact the IPAWS Program Management Office at [ipaws@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:ipaws@fema.dhs.gov).

*IPAWS is a national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency alert and information messaging to the public through cell phones and internet applications using Wireless Emergency Alerts, and to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System.*



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