

Wireless Emergency Alerts - Frequently Asked Questions

WEA Program Explanation

What are WEA messages?

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile carrier.

Who authorized the government to send WEA messages to my cell phone?

The Warning, Alert and Response Network (WARN) Act of 2006 authorized DHS and FCC to develop a Commercial Mobile Alert Service (CMAS).

What types of government agencies are authorized to send WEAs?

Public Safety agencies to include FEMA, the FCC, Department of Homeland Security, and the National Weather Service.

Does a Nevada County Public Safety agency have authorization to activate WEA?

Nevada County does not have authorization as of the date of this document. This may be an option in the future depending on future MOU's with FEMA as well as required equipment purchases.

Who will normally send WEA alerts?

Most WEA alerts will be issued by the NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS). FEMA and State officials may issue Imminent Threat Alerts.

When will I start receiving WEA messages?

WEA use begins on June 18, 2012, but many mobile devices, especially older ones, are not WEA-capable. When you buy a new mobile device, it probably will be able to receive WEA messages.

Can I turn off access to WEA?

Per the WARN Act of 2006, Congress said that no consumer could opt out of Presidential Alerts. To opt out of Amber and Imminent Threat Alerts, contact your wireless provider.

What if I don't want to receive Amber and Imminent Threat alerts?

You can opt-out of receiving WEA messages for imminent threats and AMBER alerts, but not for Presidential messages. To opt out, please contact your wireless carrier.

Does WEA know where I am? Is it tracking me?

No. WEA uses a broadcast (one-way) technology. This assures that authorities cannot collect any subscriber information, including details on who is in the targeted area, who has successfully received the emergency alert, or who may have opted out.

Does WEA replace the Emergency Alert messages I have received on my Television and Radio?

No. WEA complements the existing the Emergency Alert System which sends warnings to television and radio via broadcast, cable, and satellite.

Is this the same Emergency Notification System that Nevada County OES utilizes?

*No. Nevada County utilizes a system that notifies residents located in a specific area via their landline phones of any actions to perform during a disaster. Residents must add their cell phone numbers to the county system. For more information go to:
<http://www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/igs/oes/>*

I have heard about the Commercial Alert System (CMAS) and the Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS), are these additional government alert programs?

No. The WEA mobile alert program is a result of both the CMAS and IPAWS programs.

Where can I get additional information on WEA?

*Your wireless carriers can give you WEA information specific to your device. There are numerous websites that explain WEA in detail. Here are a couple:
<http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/>
<http://ctia.org/>*

Types of Alerts

What types of alerts will I receive?

- *Extreme weather, and other threatening emergencies in your area*
- *AMBER Alerts*
- *Presidential Alerts during a national emergency*

What types of WEA messages will the National Weather Service send?

- *Tsunami Warnings*
- *Tornado and Flash Flood Warning*
- *Hurricane, Typhoon, Dust Storm and Extreme Wind Warnings*
- *Blizzard and Ice Storm Warnings*

WEA Phones

Do I have to sign-up for WEA?

If you have a WEA-enabled phone, you are automatically enrolled

Is my device capable of receiving WEA?

Contact your wireless provider to see if your device is WEA capable. If it is not WEA capable, you might need to only upgrade your devices software, rather than purchase a new one.

Does my wireless carrier offer WEA?

Wireless carriers that cover nearly 97% of American subscribers have chosen to offer wireless alerts, including prepaid providers. To confirm the availability of WEA, please contact your wireless provider.

When will all phones be WEA capable?

The wireless industry estimates that by 2014 nearly all phones on the market will compatible with WEA.

How will I receive alerts if I don't have a WEA capable device?

WEA is one of many ways of receive emergency notifications. Other sources include news media coverage, NOAA weather radio, the Emergency Alert System on radio and TV, and social media

Will I be charged for receiving WEA messages?

No. This service is offered free by wireless carriers. WEA messages will not count towards texting limits on your wireless plan.

WEA Messages

What should I do when I receive a WEA message?

Follow any action advised by the emergency message. Since the message is limited to 90 characters, the best course of action is to check other sources of information including radio or television. Do not call 911 for additional information.

How will I know I am receiving a WEA message?

WEAs use a unique ring tone and vibration to signal an alert has arrived. Alerts will automatically “pop up” on the mobile device screen and will be limited to 90 characters.

Will I receive a WEA message if I am on vacation?

Yes. WEA alerts are targeted to specific geographic areas (generally an entire county). If your mobile device is located in the affected county, it will automatically receive and display a message.

If there is a threat in another part of the county that does not affect me, will I still receive the WEA?

Yes. Currently the WEA system only allows targeting for an entire county no matter where the threat is located in the county.

If I am not physically located in Nevada County will I still receive alerts for Nevada County?

No. Your mobile device will only receive alerts for the county you are physically located in.

What if I travel into a threat area after the WEA was originally sent?

If you travel into a threat area after an alert is first sent, your WEA-capable device will receive the message when you enter the area as long as the threat is still valid.

Will I receive WEA messages if I am traveling out of the United States?

No. WEA is not active outside of the United States.

Will I receive alerts if I am roaming?

Yes as long as you have a WEA-capable phone.

How many times will I receive a WEA message for a specific threat?

Every WEA has an expiration date/time and will be resent in the affected area till it expires; however, each individual wireless device will display the alert only once.

What does a WEA message look like?

WEA will look like a text message but it is not a text message. The WEA message will show the type and time of the alert, and action you should take and the agency issuing the alert. The message will be no more than 90 characters.

How will I know the difference between WEA and a regular text message?

WEA will not have to be opened like a SMS text messages, but will “pop up” on the device’s screen. Also the WEA will have a unique tone and vibration.

What should I do when I receive a WEA message?

Follow any action advised by the emergency message. Seek more details from the local media and authorities.

Will a WEA message interrupt my phone conversations?

No, the alert will be delayed until you finish your call.

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.