

# Wireless Emergency Alerts.

Wireless Emergency Alerts

 Share



Video

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)



Video: How WEAs Work

The Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) program is voluntarily supported by wireless operators to help make Americans safer. Alerts and warnings from local

Capable devices will have this logo on the handset's box:

public safety officials are delivered directly to your WEA-capable mobile device when there is a dangerous situation in your area.



Learn more about which WEA-capable phones are offered by your provider. Please check directly with your wireless provider if not listed below.

- AT&T
- T-Mobile
- UScellular
- Verizon

WEA messages have a unique sound and vibration so that all recipients, including those with disabilities, receive notification of the situation. Your phone must be WEA-capable—check with your provider to learn more—and turned on to receive an alert. All nationwide wireless providers and dozens of regional providers, serving over 99% of wireless subscribers, participate in the WEA program.

There are different types of Wireless Emergency Alerts:

- 1 **AMBER Alerts** – Issued by law enforcement as part of the search for an abducted child.
- 2 **Imminent Threat Alerts** – Issued by public safety officials during severe man-made or natural disasters where an imminent threat to life or property exists, such as tornadoes or dangerous flooding. They sometimes include “shelter in place” warnings.
- 3 **National Alerts** – Issued by the U.S. President or a designee as a nationwide alert only to be used during a national emergency event.
- 4 **Opt-in Test Messages** – Assesses the capability of state and local officials to send their WEAs. (The message will state that this is a TEST.)

In 360 characters or less, WEAs state who is sending the alert, what is happening, who is affected, and what action to take, and they can include embedded links so that recipients can click for more information. While

WEAs can provide critical information to wireless subscribers, you can opt out of WEA Imminent Threat and AMBER Alerts. Consumers should check with their providers for information on which features their devices support.

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WEAs are not regular text messages. WEAs use a different kind of technology to ensure they are delivered as soon as possible. In addition, WEAs are only sent to capable wireless devices within the vicinity of the alert area. For example, if a Washington, D.C., resident has a WEA-capable device and happens to be in San Diego during a natural disaster, their device would receive Imminent Threat Alerts sent to an alert area in San Diego.

Since WEA messages are broadcasted from a cell site, your device cannot send any information about you, your device, or the WEA message back to your provider or to the government. The WEA program cannot be used to track your location or gather your personal data.

The WEA program is jointly implemented and administered by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). To send a WEA, government agencies take the following steps:

- 1 Federal, state, local, and tribal public safety agencies must apply to FEMA to become alert-originating authorities.
- 2 In an emergency, alert-originating authorities send their alert message and designated alerting area to FEMA.

- 3 FEMA authenticates the sending agency and then transmits the WEA to the more than 100 participating wireless providers who may have customers in a given designated alerting area. Only the customers in that target area receive the alert.

Since its inception in 2012, more than 84,000 WEAs have been sent throughout the country. More than 180 missing children have been recovered thanks to wireless AMBER Alerts, and the program has saved countless lives during severe weather events or other imminent threats. Here are a few examples from Connecticut, New York, Utah, Texas, and Wisconsin.

# Weather warnings on the go!

[Weather.gov](#) > [Weather-Ready Nation](#) > Weather warnings on the go!

Weather-Ready Nation  
National Program

[Weather Hazards](#) [Weather Safety](#) [Ambassador](#) [Education](#) [Collaboration](#) [News & Events](#) [International](#) [About](#)



Imagine this: You're driving down the highway, humming along to your favorite tunes, when the cell phone stowed in your bag suddenly makes a strange noise. To investigate, you take the next exit and safely pull over to check the screen. Good thing you did: Your phone just alerted you to a tornado a few miles away in same county you're driving through.

Sound plausible? It is. America's wireless industry is helping to build a Weather-Ready Nation through a nationwide text emergency alert system, called Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), which will warn you when weather threatens.

And check out [real stories](#) of how WEA has saved lives across America.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What are WEA messages?

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile carrier. Government partners include local and state public safety agencies, FEMA, the FCC, the Department of Homeland Security, and the National Weather Service. No signup is required! Alerts are sent automatically to WEA-capable phones during an emergency.

### 2. Why is this important to me?

Alerts received at the right time can help keep you safe during an emergency. With WEA, alerts can be sent to your mobile device when you may be in harm's way, without need to download an app or subscribe to a service.

### 3. What types of alerts will I receive?

- Extreme Weather and Hydrologic Warnings
- Local emergencies requiring evacuation or immediate action
- AMBER Alerts
- Blue Alerts
- Presidential Alerts during a national emergency

### 4. What does a WEA message look like?

WEA will look like a text message. The WEA message will typically show the type and time of the alert, any action you should take, and the agency issuing the alert. The length and language of the message received on a particular device will be dependent on the wireless network and the language setting of the device. Messages will be up to 360 characters on 4G LTE networks and beyond. WEA message length will be a maximum of 90 characters on 3G and earlier networks. Please see the current [NWS WEA messages in English and Spanish](#).

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

WEA messages include a special tone and vibration, both repeated twice.

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

Warnings for Tsunamis ([see Fact Sheet](#)), Tornado, Severe Thunderstorm (only when the damage threat is destructive), Flash Flood (only when the damage threat is considerable or catastrophic), Hurricane, Typhoon, Storm Surge, Extreme Wind, Dust Storm and [Snow Squall](#).

### 7. What should I do when I receive a WEA message?

Follow any action advised by the emergency message. Seek more details from your favorite TV or radio station, NOAA Weather Radio, news website, desktop application, mobile application, or other trusted source of information.

### 8. Will I receive a WEA message if I'm visiting an area where I don't live, or outside the area where my phone is registered?

Yes, if you have a WEA-capable phone and your wireless carrier participates in the program. For information about which mobile devices are WEA-capable and carrier participation, please visit: <http://www.ctia.org/consumer-resources/wireless-emergency-alerts> or contact your wireless carrier.

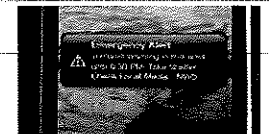
### 9. What if I travel into a threat area after a WEA message is already sent?

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.

### 10. Does my cell phone have all WEA capabilities?

Many wireless devices available since 2012 support the ability to receive and present a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA). As WEA has been enhanced with new features, wireless devices can support WEA 1.0, 2.0 or 3.0. Some of the features supported for each WEA version include:

- WEA 1.0 supports alerts up to 90 characters in length and only in English.
- WEA 2.0 supports alerts up to 360 characters in length and Spanish alerts, so long as the alerting authority transmits in Spanish. Device settings may determine whether English or Spanish alerts are displayed.
- WEA 3.0 can support geographical targeting accuracy of 0.1 mile (1/10 mile). WEA 1.0 and 2.0 devices, and in some cases 3.0 devices, cannot support this enhanced geographic targeting. In cases where WEA 3.0 is not supported, the alert may be presented, but may not be within 0.1 mile accuracy.



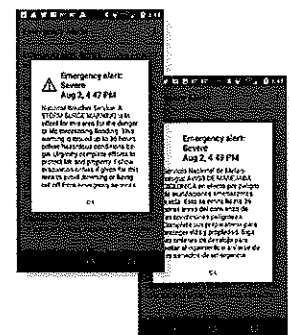
#### Wireless Emergency Alerts - English

With a unique sound and vibration, Wireless Emergency Alerts keep you in the know, wherever you are.



#### Wireless Emergency Alerts - Español

Con una alerta de sonido y vibración, Alertas Inalámbricas de Emergencia te mantienen al tanto donde estás.



Examples of Wireless Emergency Alerts in English and Spanish.

For more information about WEA, please visit the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#), [Federal Communications Commission](#) or [CTIA](#). For more information about your wireless device and WEA, please visit the website of the device manufacturer or your wireless provider.

**11. Is this the same service public safety agencies have asked the public to register for?**

No, but they are complementary. Local agencies may have asked you to sign up to receive telephone calls, text messages, or emails. Those messages often include specific details about a critical event. WEA are very short messages designed to get your attention in an emergency situation. They may not give all the details you receive from other notification services.

**12. Will I be charged for receiving WEA messages?**

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

**13. Does WEA know where I am? Is it tracking me?**

No. WEA uses radio technology to broadcast the alert from cell towers to mobile devices in the area of the threat. Therefore, WEA doesn't know exactly who is tuned in.

**14. Will a WEA message interrupt my phone conversations?**

No, the alert will not interrupt your call.

**15. How often will I receive WEA messages?**

You may receive frequent WEA messages during an emergency. Message frequency depends on the number of imminent threats to life or property in your area.

**16. 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.

**17. What if I don't want to receive WEA messages?**

You can opt-out of receiving WEA messages for imminent threats and AMBER alerts, but not for Presidential messages. To opt out, please refer to instructions from your wireless carrier or visit <http://www.ctia.org/consumer-resources/wireless-emergency-alerts> for more information.

**18. Why did I receive an alert when there was no warning in effect for my location?**

WEA messages are broadcast using radio-like technology from cell towers in, and sometimes around, the actual warning area. If your device is not capable of WEA 3.0 (see item #10 above), an alert can reach cell phones outside of the actual warning area depending on the broadcast range of the cell towers which broadcast the alert.

**19. How will I receive alerts if I don't have a WEA-capable device?**

WEA is one of many ways you can receive emergency notifications. Other sources include [NOAA Weather Radio](#), news media coverage, the [Emergency Alert System](#) on radio and TV broadcasts, desktop applications, mobile applications, and other alerting methods offered by local and state public safety agencies.

**20. How does the NWS activate a Wireless Emergency Alert on my cell phone?**

The NWS pushes our suite of warnings, advisories, and watches to a national collection point called the [Integrated Public Alert and Warning System \(IPAWS\)](#). The NWS specially marks our most critical NWS alerts for WEA distribution, so that when they reach IPAWS, they are pushed to commercial wireless carriers who broadcast the alert from cell towers in the threat area to your cell phone. IPAWS also serves as collection point for non-weather alerts, such as civil and child abduction emergency messages which are issued by other emergency authorities. Once an alert is in IPAWS, the alert may be made available through a variety of channels for further distribution, such as broadcast over television/radio stations, sirens, display on highway signs, desktop and mobile alert software application, and the Wireless Emergency Alert system.

[WEA Factsheet \(PDF\)](#) - Download a factsheet on Wireless Emergency Alerts.

Prepare

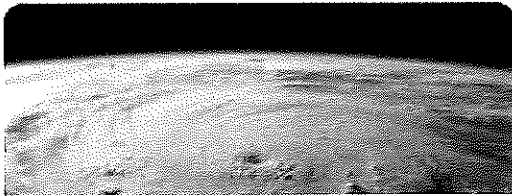


Latest A-Z

Prepare yourself for all kinds of disasters.  
Discover quick and easy ways to protect  
yourself, your family and property.



How to Evacuate a Wildfire Safely



## PLAN: Learn how to prepare for common hazards quickly and easily.

Whether you're experienced or just starting out, the FEMA app can help you learn basic preparedness strategies like how to create a family emergency communication plan, what to pack in your emergency kit, and what to do immediately after a disaster.

## Download the FEMA App

Get real-time weather and emergency alerts, disaster news, and more with the FEMA app.



Download on the  
**App Store**



Alerts

 Baltimore, MD

Flash Flood Warning issued June 1 at 6:00PM EDT until 10:00PM EDT by NWS Baltimore-Washington for...



Tornado Watch issued June 1 at 5:55PM EDT until 7:30PM EDT by NWS Baltimore-Washington for the area including...

Severe Thunderstorm Watch issued June 1 at 5:15PM EDT until 7:30PM EDT by NWS Baltimore-Washington for...

Flood Watch issued June 1 at 11:48AM EDT until 11:00PM EDT by NWS Baltimore-Washington for the area including...

**PROTECT: Knowing when and how to protect yourself, your loved ones and your property during a disaster can make all the difference.**

With the FEMA app, you can receive real-time weather and emergency alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations nationwide. It can also help you find a nearby shelter if you need to evacuate to a safe space.

## Download the FEMA App

Get real-time weather and emergency alerts, disaster news, and more with the FEMA app.



Download on the  
**App Store**





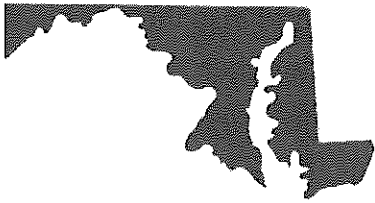
Recover



Find resources and current information to help during major disaster declarations in your main location.



Baltimore, MD



*Major Disaster Declaration*

**Maryland Remnants of Hurricane Ida**  
Declaration Date: September 5, 2021

**RECOVER:** The FEMA App gives you the tools you need to recover after a disaster.

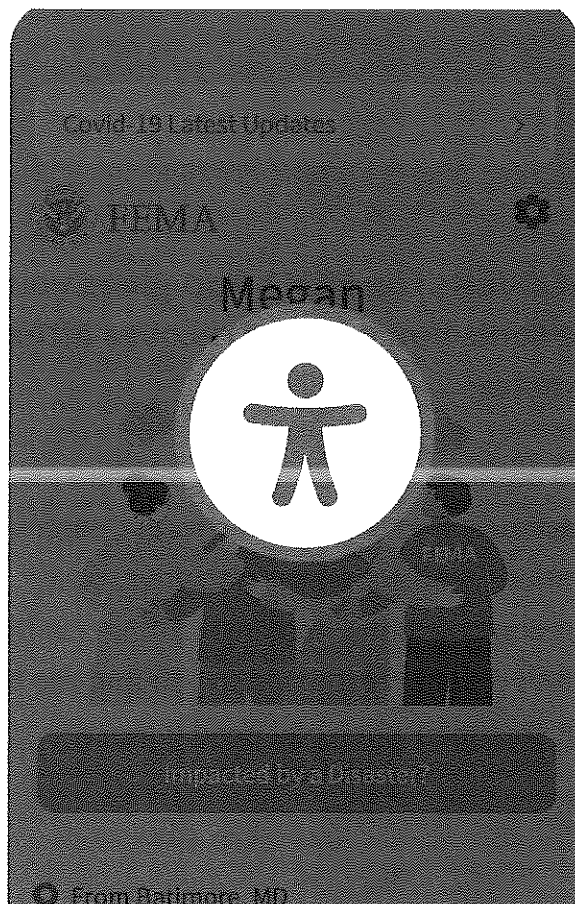
Find out if your location is eligible for FEMA assistance, find Disaster Recovery Center locations, and get answers to your most pressing questions. Instantly connect with FEMA's disaster resources so you find the help that you need when you need it most.

## Download the FEMA App

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Download on the  
**App Store**



## **INCLUSIVE DESIGN: An app for everyone.**

The FEMA app is compatible with screen reader technology (Voice Over / TalkBack). The app follows federal accessibility requirements and also includes inclusive design principles such as consistent user interfaces, plain language and ALT text descriptions. To ensure the best screen reader experience, we recommend using iOS 11.0 and later and Android 5.0 and later.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How can I download the FEMA App?**

The FEMA app is available for both Android and iOS. You can download the FEMA app on [Google](#)

### **Download the FEMA App**

Get real-time weather and emergency alerts, disaster news, and more with the FEMA app.

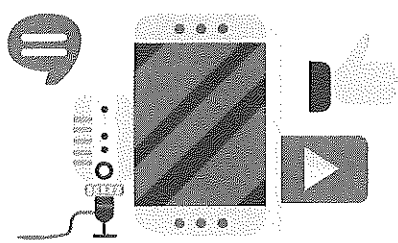


## How to update your main location in the FEMA App

You can update your main location in the FEMA App by:

1. Open **Settings** and select **Your Main Location**.
2. Delete your old location.
3. Enter your new main location and select it.
4. Tap the Back arrow or Close button to save your new main location.

[\*\*See more FAQs.\*\*](#)



### FEMA App Promotional Toolkit

The [FEMA App Social Media Toolkit](#) includes talking points, graphics, and other promotional materials.

## Text Messages from FEMA

Text messages from FEMA help people find disaster-related information with a tap of a button.

### Download the FEMA App

Get real-time weather and emergency alerts, disaster news, and more with the FEMA app.

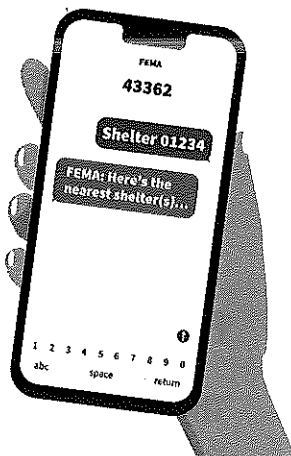


Use FEMA text messaging to find up to three emergency shelters or FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers nearby.



Text  
**SHELTER**  
and your  
**ZIP CODE**  
to **43362**

Example: Shelter 01234



#### TEXT FOR HELP

To search for shelters near you, text **SHELTER** and your **ZIP code** to **43362** (e.g. Shelter 12345). You may look up shelters any time through the [American Red Cross shelter map](#) or by downloading the [FEMA App](#).

The 43362 Text/SMS short code currently only works within the continental U.S. and common mobile phone carriers within Puerto Rico and Guam.

For other U.S. territories please download the FEMA App on [iOS](#) and [Android](#) (available in English and Spanish) to look up shelter and Disaster Recovery Center locations, or visit one of the links below:



[American Red Cross shelter map](#)

### Download the FEMA App

Get real-time weather and emergency alerts, disaster news, and more with the FEMA app.



## Safety Tips

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To sign up to receive general information about how to prepare for any type of disaster, text **PREPARE** to **43362**.

To sign up for disaster specific safety tips, text one of the keywords below to 43362:

- **BLACKOUT**
- **EARTHQUAKE**
- **FIRE**
- **WILDFIRE**
- **WINTER**
- **FLOOD**
- **HURRICANE**
- **TORNADO**

If you would like to subscribe to more than one list, please send a separate text for each topic.

Sending STOP will automatically unsubscribe you from all lists. Message frequency may vary. [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

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