

Wireless Public Alerting (WPA) FAQ

1. What is wireless public alerting?

Wireless Public Alerting is a communications technology that provides one way communication to an LTE smart phone from its LTE network (cellular connection) to display alert messages. This capability will allow users to receive critical information about hazards on their smart phone; currently in BC alerts are only issued for Tsunami's although other hazards are expected to be added in the future.

2. Will all wireless devices receive emergency alerts?

No. In order for emergency alerts to be received on a wireless device four conditions must be met.

The wireless device must be:

- i. A device like a smartphone (cell phone) that is able to use the LTE network for high-speed wireless communication (LTE is commonly referred to as "4G LTE");
- ii. Wireless Public Alerting compatible (WPA);
- iii. Connected to an LTE cellular network at the time the emergency alert is issued; and
- iv. The connected LTE device must be within the area of the alert. Unlike radio and television broadcasting, which often has broad areas of coverage; wireless public alerting is geo-targeted and can be very specific to a limited area of coverage. As a result, if an emergency alert reaches your wireless device, you are located in an area where there is an imminent danger.

3. Are all smart phones WPA-compatible?

No, a wireless device that is WPA-compatible is (1) an LTE-device, and (2) has special software embedded in it which allows for messages sent by your service provider, via Cell Broadcast over an LTE network connection to be displayed. At the time of initial operating capability (April 6 2018) it is estimated that 30% of LTE smart phones will be WPA compatible, moving towards 100% over several years as hardware is replaced by the consumers.

4. Are these emergency alerts sent as a text message?

No. While the emergency alert may look like a text message it is not. Emergency alerts are sent via Cell Broadcast distribution which is a mobile technology that allows messages to be broadcast to all compatible wireless devices within a designated geographical area simultaneously.

5. Will emergency alerts interrupt or end a voice-call or another activity in progress?

Emergency alerts will not end or terminate a voice call or data session in progress.

If you are on a voice-call when the emergency alert is received, you will be made aware of the alert by a notification tone (similar to call waiting). When your call terminates the alert will be displayed on your wireless device.

If you are on a data session, your session will continue but it may be briefly interrupted by the emergency alert appearing on your wireless device screen

6. Will I receive an emergency alert if my wireless device is turned off, set to silent or set to do not disturb (DND) ?

A compatible wireless device that is **turned off** will not turn on and display an emergency alert. If the emergency alert is still active when the wireless device is powered on, and the user is still in the alert area, the wireless device will then display the alert.

A compatible wireless device that is set to **silent** will display an emergency alert, but you might not hear the emergency alert sound. The emergency alert sound will usually play at the current volume setting on the wireless device, so if your wireless device is set to silent, no sound will accompany the emergency alert message.

A compatible wireless device that is set to **do not disturb** will not necessarily override this setting. In most cases you will only be made aware of the alert when DND mode is turned off. It is possible that some wireless devices may override the DND setting, but there is no guarantee.

7. If my wireless device is off for an extended period of time, will the emergency alert appear once I turn my phone back on?

When you turn the compatible wireless device on if the emergency alert is still active and you are within the emergency alert area, the emergency alert will be displayed. If the emergency alert is no longer active or if you have travelled outside of the alert area, it will not be delivered to the device.

8. Will I receive an emergency alert if my phone is connected to Wi-Fi?

While on Wi-Fi, if the compatible wireless device can still communicate with the LTE cellular network, it will receive emergency alerts. If the wireless device is not within reach of the LTE cellular network (or is set to Wi-Fi only) it will not receive an emergency alert.

9. What should I do if I receive an emergency alert on my wireless device?

Upon receiving the emergency alert it is important to take action safely. Stop what you are doing when it is safe to do so and read the emergency alert. Government officials will include, within the emergency alert, the information you need for any action you need to take. This could include but is not limited to: limit unnecessary travel, evacuate the areas, seek shelter, etc.

10. What should I do if I receive an emergency alert on my wireless device while driving?

It is important to take action safely, especially if the emergency alert is received while operating a vehicle. If you are driving, it is important to remain calm and pull over at your earliest opportunity to view the emergency alert.

11. Will I be charged if I receive an emergency alert on my wireless device if I don't have unlimited texting or data within my mobile plan?

No. Wireless alerts are sent on a specific cellular channel that is separate from normal text and data traffic. While the alerts may look like text messages, they are not text messages and are not billed like text messages.

Also, emergency alerts are sent to wireless devices in a specific geographic area and do not require the phone numbers of those devices. As such there is no ability to identify or bill for the messages that are received.

12. Can I opt out of receiving emergency alerts on my wireless device?

No. Emergency alerts received on your compatible wireless device are relevant to you and require immediate attention, and government regulations mandate that all compatible wireless devices receive all relevant alerts.

13. Will I receive emergency alerts on my wireless device if I'm travelling to or from another province or jurisdiction within Canada? What about the US?

Yes. Emergency alerts are issued to a defined geographic area, such that only people in the defined area will receive the emergency alerts. If you are travelling and happen to be in another province when an emergency alert is issued for your physical location, your compatible wireless device will receive the emergency alert within seconds of being issued, provided your phone is powered on, not set to DND and connected to the LTE cellular network.

US alerts differ in technology from Canadian alerts, travelers or those close to the border operating on a US carrier network may receive alerts intended for the US

location of the cell tower, these alerts will appear like a text message and may have a different tone / vibration than Canadian alerts.

14. Will I receive emergency alerts on my wireless device relevant to where I live while I am travelling away from home?

No. If you are travelling, you will only receive emergency alerts that occur where you are.

Canadians can keep track of emergency alerts occurring in specific areas (e.g. where they or other family members live) through a number of available apps and online services.

15. Will I still receive emergency alerts if wireless device towers are affected by the situation?

As long as your device is connected to an LTE network in the affected area you will receive the alert.

16. Are wireless alerts identical to radio and TV alerts?

No. All alerts will contain the same type of information about the event however due to different mediums and technical constraints the alerts will differ slightly. Wireless alerts are limited to 600 characters where radio and tv use 900-1400 characters.

17. Will alerts sent to my wireless device be used to gather data about me?

No. Emergency alerts are sent using Cell Broadcast distribution. Cell Broadcast can only transmit information **to** your wireless device. This means that no data is being gathered about you, your wireless device or your location when emergency alerts are sent out.

18. Can I share this document with other interested parties?

Yes! This document is meant as a heads up for emergency management personnel as well as interested first responders such as Fire, Ambulance, Police and any other interested agencies or persons. It is not intended for public consumption at this time.

19. Where can I get more information:

This document is only meant as a heads up in advance of the public advertising campaign, for more information please contact:

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**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR PUBLIC RELEASE OF THIS INFORMATION
NATIONALLY:**

Date	Event
May 6-12	Emergency Preparedness Week - live WPA test
	Press release (provincial/territorial) announcing WPA test day
May 1-4	Press release promoting upcoming live WPA tests, including provincial/territorial schedule
April 6	WPA operational
	Press release promoting operational launch of WPA
April 2-5	Press release promoting upcoming operational launch of WPA
March 19	Launch of Alert Ready + WPA awareness campaign
	Press release promoting the Alert Ready + WPA awareness campaign
March 12	Launch of updated AlertReady.ca (TBC)