

Keeping Minnesota *Ready*



In emergencies, warnings can save lives. But traditional warning methods such as television, radio and outdoor sirens don't always reach everyone.

Emergency officials now have a new way to send warnings directly to cell phones in affected areas — Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs).

These short messages may look like a text message, but unlike texts, which are sent directly to your phone number, these warnings will be broadcast to all phones within range of designated cell.

The alerts will tell you the type of warning, the affected area, and the duration. You'll need to turn to other sources, such as television or your NOAA All-Hazards radio, to get more detailed information about what is happening and what actions you should take.

Key Things to Know:

- WEA messages may look like a text, or appear over your home screen.
- The alert message will include a unique ringtone and vibration.
- You will never be charged for WEA messages.
- Emergency alerts will not interrupt any calls or downloads in progress. If you're on the phone when the alert goes out, you'll get the message when you end your call.
- You need not have GPS or any other special features turned on to receive the alerts.
- The system does not identify your location or phone number – it simply sends the message to all devices in a given area.
- If you're on the road and enter an area with an active warning, you'll receive a WEA message as soon as you come within range of one of the affected cell towers.

WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS: Three Types Of Warnings

- AMBER ALERTS** — Issued by the BCA; they will share information about a child abduction.
- IMMINENT THREAT ALERTS** — Typically issued by the National Weather Service; tornado, flash flood and blizzard warnings are some of the warnings that will initially be sent by the NWS.
- PRESIDENTIAL ALERTS** — Issued by the U.S. President in the event of a nationwide emergency.

Cell phone users may choose to opt out of imminent threat and/or AMBER alerts, but the procedures vary by carrier. Contact your wireless provider for more information.

The National Weather Service strongly encourages all residents not to opt out of these potentially life-saving messages.

No president has ever yet had to issue a presidential alert, but should one become necessary, cell phone providers are required to broadcast it to all WEA-capable phones.

