



FEMA

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For Immediate Release

**NATIONWIDE EMERGENCY ALERT TEST PLANNED FOR
OCTOBER 3; TEST MESSAGES WILL BE SENT TO CELL PHONES,
TV, AND RADIO**

***FEMA and FCC Share Key Points About First-Ever Nationwide Wireless Alert Test,
Fourth TV and Radio Alert Test***

WASHINGTON, October 2, 2018—FEMA, in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission, will conduct a [nationwide test](#) of the [Emergency Alert System](#) and [Wireless Emergency Alerts](#) on Wednesday, October 3, 2018. The WEA portion of the test, which will be sent to consumer cell phones, will begin at 2:18 p.m. EDT. The EAS portion of the test, which will be sent to radio and television, will follow at 2:20 p.m. EDT. This will be the fourth nationwide EAS test and the first nationwide WEA test. In light of the upcoming test, the agencies share the following key informational points:

THE BASICS

- **WHY:** The purpose of the test is to ensure that EAS and WEA are both effective means of warning the public about emergencies, particularly those on the national level. Periodic testing of public alert and warning systems helps to assess the operational readiness of alerting infrastructure and to identify any needed technological and administrative improvements.
- **HOW:** The EAS and WEA test messages will be sent using FEMA’s Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), a centralized Internet-based system administered by FEMA that enables authorities to send authenticated emergency messages to the public through multiple communications networks.
- **WHO:** FEMA will administer the test, in cooperation with the FCC and the National Weather Service, and with the participation of the communications industry.
- **WHEN:** October 3, 2018, beginning at 2:18 p.m. EDT on cell phones and 2:20 p.m. EDT on TV and radio. (This is the test back-up date; the test was [previously postponed](#) due to response efforts to Hurricane Florence.)

NATIONWIDE ALERT TEST TO CELL PHONES

- **THE WIRELESS ALERT TEST MESSAGE:** The WEA test message will appear on consumers’ phones and read, “THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed.” Phones will display this national test using the header “Presidential Alert.” These nationwide alerts, established pursuant to

the WARN Act of 2006, are meant for use in a national emergency and are the only type of alert that can be sent simultaneously nationwide by FEMA.

- **RECIPIENTS:** Many members of the public will receive the WEA test message on their cell phones. Specifically, beginning at 2:18 p.m. EDT, cell towers will broadcast the WEA test for approximately 30 minutes. During this time, WEA-compatible wireless phones that are switched on, within range of an active cell tower, and whose wireless provider participates in WEA, should be capable of receiving the test message. Wireless phones should receive the message only once.
- **BACKGROUND ON SYSTEM:** The WEA system, launched in 2012, is used to warn the public about dangerous weather, missing children, and other critical situations through alerts on cell phones. Alerts are created and sent by authorized federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governmental agencies through IPAWS to participating wireless providers, which deliver the alerts to compatible handsets in geo-targeted areas. To help ensure that WEA alerts are accessible to the entire public, including people with disabilities, WEA alerts are accompanied by a unique tone and vibration. The national WEA test will use the same special tone and vibration. In the event of a national emergency, a Presidential WEA alert would be issued at the direction of the President and/or his/her designee, and activated by FEMA.

NATIONWIDE TV AND RADIO ALERT TEST

- **TV & RADIO ALERT TEST:** The EAS portion of the test is scheduled to last approximately one minute and will be conducted with the participation of radio and television broadcasters, cable systems, satellite radio and television providers, and wireline video providers (“EAS participants”).
- **THE TV & RADIO TEST MESSAGE:** The EAS test message will be similar to the regular monthly EAS test messages with which the public is familiar. It will state: “THIS IS A TEST of the National Emergency Alert System. This system was developed by broadcast and cable operators in voluntary cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Communications Commission, and local authorities to keep you informed in the event of an emergency. If this had been an actual emergency an official message would have followed the tone alert you heard at the start of this message. A similar wireless emergency alert test message has been sent to all cell phones nationwide. Some cell phones will receive the message; others will not. No action is required.”
- **BILINGUAL:** The EAS test message will be transmitted in both English and Spanish, with EAS participants deciding which version to use for their communities.
- **BACKGROUND ON SYSTEM:** Emergency alerts are created and sent by authorized federal, state, local, tribal and territorial government agencies. EAS participants receive the alerts through IPAWS or through local “over the air” monitoring sources. EAS participants then disseminate the emergency alerts to affected communities. The FCC prescribes technical and procedural rules for communications providers’ participation in this process.

FEMA and the FCC have engaged in significant coordination with EAS participants, wireless providers, emergency managers, and other stakeholders in preparation for this EAS-WEA national test to minimize confusion and to maximize the public safety value of the test. The test is intended to ensure public safety officials have the methods and systems that will deliver urgent alerts and warnings to the public in times of an emergency or disaster, including requirements to help ensure that televised EAS messages are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

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