

# Wireless Emergency Alerts: Using Wireless Technology to Help Keep People Safe



Today's mobile devices help people everywhere deal with all kinds of events – even life-threatening emergencies.



Public safety officials already use **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs)** to help warn residents of approaching danger and to alert the public to missing children.



And now with advances in wireless technology, **the existing WEA system can also be used to share life-saving information before, during, and after a crisis.**



**When Can Wireless Emergency Alerts Help Keep People Safe?** Four conditions **must be** met for a consumer to receive a WEA message:

- Wireless coverage must be available in the area;
- The serving wireless network must be participating in the WEA system;
- The consumer's device must be WEA-capable; and
- The consumer's device must be in the area where the alert originator specified to broadcast the alert.

According to the FCC, **suitable wireless coverage is available throughout almost the entire United States** because one or more Long-Term Evolution (LTE) wireless providers serve over 99.6% of the U.S. population in all 50 states.

**Today, hundreds of millions of wireless subscribers are served by networks participating in the Wireless Emergency Alert system.** As of late 2017, all nation-wide wireless carriers and many regional wireless carriers are actively participating in the WEA system via the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, referred to as IPAWS.

Consumers have been buying WEA-capable devices since 2011, so while non-compatible wireless phones are still in the market, **nearly all smartphones used today are WEA-capable and can receive WEA messages.**



**WEA Alerting Areas:** Geographic precision can make WEA messages even more helpful during emergencies. Currently, all four nation-wide wireless carriers are capable of delivering WEA messages at the cell-sector level – and **the industry is working towards providing greater accuracy for disseminating warnings and alerts that may require more precision.**

**WEA Message Content:** Public safety officials originating WEA messages can not only warn people of approaching threats or emergency conditions, but they can advise on resources and response actions before, during, and after the event. The **upcoming expansion of WEA message length** to 360 characters will help public safety officials **provide even more useful information** during emergency situations.

