

WIRELESS PUBLIC ALERTING – ALBERTA

FAQs

Wireless Public Alerting

1. What is wireless public alerting?

Wireless public alerting allows governments across Canada to send public safety messages directly to smartphones in a region. If there is an emergency in your local area you will get an alert on your compatible smartphone. For your phone to be compatible it should be connected to the 4G LTE network through your cell phone provider. You can learn more at alertready.ca, and check if your phone is compatible to receive wireless alerts.

2. When will wireless public alerting start?

Wireless alerting will be effective across Canada on April 6, 2018. You can receive a wireless alert anytime after this date.

3. Will all wireless devices receive alerts?

No. In order for emergency alerts to be received on a wireless device, three conditions must be met. The wireless device must be:

1. An LTE-device like a smartphone (LTE is commonly referred to as “4G LTE”);
2. Wireless public alerting (WPA)-compatible; and
3. Connected to an LTE cellular network at the time the emergency alert is issued.

Visit the Alberta section of AlertReady.ca website to find a link to the section of your wireless service provider’s website that provides information on compatible devices.

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

No. While the wireless alert may look like a text message, it is not a text message. Wireless alerts are sent via cell broadcast distribution. Cell broadcast, similar to radio broadcast, is technology that allows messages to be broadcast to all compatible wireless devices within a designated geographical area. The alerts are one-way messages, there is no tool to reply to them.

Cell broadcast can be compared to radio broadcast. Radio towers broadcast music to people in defined geographic areas as long as the individuals can pick-up the broadcast signal and have their radios turned on. Cell broadcast messages similarly are delivered to those compatible wireless devices that are within range of cell towers and antennas in the designated area.

5. Are other mobile devices (e.g. tablets) capable of receiving wireless alerts?

Wireless service providers are required to distribute wireless emergency alerts to compatible smartphones that can access LTE cellular networks. Additional wireless devices such as tablets and smartwatches may be capable to receive some form of the message. However, it will not necessarily be received on the device in the Alert Ready format.

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For information on compatible wireless devices offered by your wireless service provider, visit the Alberta section of AlertReady.ca.

6. Will wireless alerts interrupt or end a voice-call or another activity in progress?

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

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

7. Will I receive a wireless alert if my device is off or set to silent?

A compatible wireless device that is turned off will not display an alert. If the 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 alert, but you might not hear the alert sound. The emergency alert sound will usually play at whatever the current volume setting is on the wireless device, so if your wireless device is set to silent, no sound will accompany the emergency alert message. In some instances the alert sound may override your user settings.

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

If the wireless alert is still active when the compatible device is turned back on and you are within the alert area, the wireless alert will be displayed. If the alert is no longer active or if you have travelled outside of the alert area, it will not be displayed.

9. Will I receive a wireless alert if my phone is connected to Wi-Fi?

If the compatible wireless device can still communicate with the LTE cellular network while on Wi-Fi, it will receive wireless 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 alert.

10. What should I do if I receive a test alert on my wireless device?

Test alert messages will be identified as such. Test alerts are intended to test the functionality of the system and inform consumers of wireless alerts. Test alerts do not require the consumer to take steps to secure their safety.

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You may be required to acknowledge receipt of the wireless alert in order to allow for your wireless device to resume normal functioning. In the event that you cannot acknowledge the alert, the alert sound and vibration will continue for eight seconds. Depending on your specific wireless device, additional reminders may occur.

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

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

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

It is important to take action safely, especially if the 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 wireless alert.

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

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.

Wireless alerts do not require the phone numbers of cell phones, so there is no ability to identify or bill for the messages that are received.

14. 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. Emergency alerts are targeted, so if an alert reaches your device, you are in an area where there is immediate danger.

Government of Canada regulations require that all compatible wireless devices receive all relevant alerts.

15. Will I receive alerts on my wireless device if I'm travelling to or from another province or jurisdiction within Canada?

Yes. Wireless alerts are issued to a defined geographic area so that only people in the defined area will receive the alerts. If you are travelling and happen to be in another province when an

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alert is issued, your compatible wireless device will receive the alert within seconds of being issued, provided your phone is powered on and connected to the LTE cellular network.

16. Will I receive 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 alerts that occur where you are.

Canadians can keep track of emergency alerts occurring in specific areas through the Alberta Emergency Alert app and www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca.

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

Alerts are broadcast from cellular towers and antennas within the area specified by the alert issuer. If you are in an affected area but your wireless device is unable to connect to any towers/antennas because of the situation, you will not receive the alert on your wireless device. However, you will still receive emergency alerts through the Alberta Emergency Alert App. So make sure you download the app on your phone.

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

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

Alberta Emergency Alert App

19. What is the difference between the Alberta Emergency Alert app and the new wireless alert?

Only the most serious alerts will be sent out using the new wireless alerting system. Other alerts that provide information on developing emergencies or serious alerts from other areas will be delivered to you via the Alberta Emergency Alert app, social media and the [Alberta Emergency Alert](http://www.albertaemergencyalert.ca) website. The wireless alert message will only contain basic information, and maps and more details will be available from the app and website.

20. Will I receive wireless alerts, if I have the Alberta Emergency Alert app on my smart phone?

The wireless alert messages will be delivered to your wireless device only if you are in the impacted area. Depending on your preference, the Alberta Emergency Alert app could receive alerts for the entire province.

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21. Can I remove the Alberta Emergency Alert app from my phone now that wireless alerts are being sent to me?

This is not recommended. The app and wireless alert message are complementary with the wireless alert being a short message and the app providing more detail and a map.

22. Will the alert go off on my smartphone twice if I have the Alberta Emergency Alert app and receive a wireless alert message?

Yes. You will receive two alerts. However, we are working to blend the two systems so that only one alarm is sounded for the alert.