

# EMERGENCY MOBILE ALERTS EXPLAINED

- A GUIDE FOR MEDIA -  
May 2023

**GET READY**



**National Emergency  
Management Agency**  
Te Rākau Whakamarumarū

## **This guide has been prepared for media...**

To explain how Emergency Mobile Alerts work and to answer questions that media and their audiences may have.

Journalists are welcome to use any part of this guide, attributing messages to the National Emergency Management Agency.

**Remember to put safety first. Don't take any chances.  
If life or property is at risk dial 111.**

## What is an Emergency Mobile Alert?

- Messages about emergencies
- Designed to keep people safe
- Broadcast to all capable phones from targeted cell towers

## The alerts are:

- Targeted to areas affected by serious hazards
- Only sent when there is a serious threat to life, health or property or for test purposes
- Sent by these authorised emergency agencies: the National Emergency Management Agency, Local Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups, New Zealand Police, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Primary Industries.  
The agency sending the Emergency Mobile Alert will be identified in the alert message.



## Don't wait for an official warning!

Emergency Mobile Alerts do not replace other emergency alerts, or the need to take action after natural warnings.

You still need to be prepared for an emergency and you should not wait to get an alert before you act.

**If you feel your life is in danger, take immediate action.**

## Make sure you have your own emergency plan that includes:

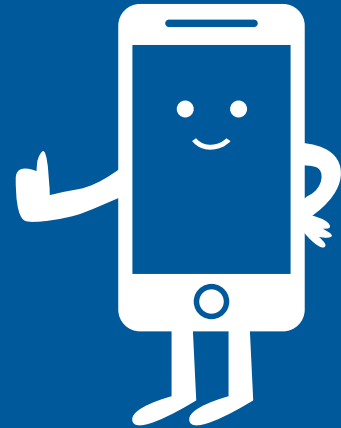
- What to do
- Where to go
- Who to go to for help
- Who you might need to look after



## What is an EMA capable phone?

All new phones sold by New Zealand network operators are now compatible with Emergency Mobile Alert.

If your phone is from overseas or parallel-imported, you may receive Emergency Mobile Alerts in New Zealand, however your experience may differ from those sold in New Zealand e.g. On some phones it is called a Presidential Alert.



# WHAT AREAS GET EMA?



**Emergency Mobile Alerts are broadcast to all capable phones from targeted cell towers.**

The alerts are only targeted to areas affected by serious hazards.

If your phone is turned on, capable and inside the targeted location's cell tower range you should get the alert.

Emergency Mobile Alerts will be targeted to areas under threat only. People outside the targeted broadcast area won't receive the alert.

You may receive an Emergency Mobile Alert when you enter the cell tower broadcast area when there is an active alert being broadcast.

You don't have to download an app or subscribe to a service and your cell phone number is not on a list – you will get the alert because of your proximity to the broadcasting cell tower.

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE AN ALERT

**If you get an alert, read the message and take it seriously.**

It will tell you what the emergency is and what to do.

It will also tell you which agency sent the message and, if needed, where to go for more information.

# WHEN ARE EMERGENCY MOBILE ALERTS USED?

**Emergency Mobile Alerts are used to keep people safe if there is an emergency.**

The alerts will only be sent when there are serious threats to life, health or property and for test purposes.

Emergency Mobile Alert may be used to warn you of serious threats such as:

- a tsunami affecting land areas,
- a wildfire affecting people,
- seriously contaminated drinking water

- Emergency Mobile Alerts will not be used for advertising or promotions and they do not gather data.
- Emergency Mobile Alert does not use your mobile phone number and it is impossible to collect information about you, your cell phone use or your location from an Emergency Mobile Alert.



# WHY DIDN'T I GET AN EMERGENCY MOBILE ALERT?

**If you didn't receive an Emergency Mobile Alert, it's most likely because of any of these three reasons:**

1. You're outside of the geotargeted area. If you receive the alert at a later time than others, it may be because you have just entered the geotargeted area.
2. You're outside of a mobile coverage area - EMA can only be sent to areas with mobile coverage.
3. Your phone is not EMA capable, or the software is not up to date.

If your phone is not capable or you do not get mobile coverage consider other channels you might get emergency information from – such as radio and television, Wifi, word of mouth, and being alert to the natural warning signs. There may also be someone in your household, workplace or neighbourhood who can relay EMA messages to you.

# Emergency Mobile Alerts in Tsunami Warnings

Depending on how far away the tsunami is, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) will send an Emergency Mobile Alert to phones in the area of greatest risk:

- Long OR Strong messaging in first instance of large local source earthquake where Tsunami risk has not yet been assessed
- EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY to the areas assessed as being under threat
- or PREPARE TO EVACUATE (if the first waves aren't expected to arrive for several hours).

IF AN EARTHQUAKE IS

**LONG** OR  
**STRONG,**  
**GET GONE**



## Local CDEM Groups will also issue an Emergency Mobile Alert. CDEM Groups will have the information about:

- which tsunami zones are being evacuated in their areas of responsibility
- which specific coastal areas are off limits
- detailed local evacuation information



### **Don't wait for an official warning!**

Emergency Mobile Alerts do not replace other emergency alerts, or the need to take action after natural warnings.

You still need to be prepared for an emergency and you should not wait to get an alert before you act.

**If you feel your life is in danger, take immediate action.**

## Nationwide Testing

Testing is a necessary part of making sure the Emergency Mobile Alert system works well.

Previous nationwide tests were sent to cell towers all over New Zealand where approximately four million phones were capable of receiving the alert.

**The tests allowed us to evaluate:**

- the system
- cell towers
- and your phone's ability to receive the alert

If you do not want to be disturbed, turn your phone off or switch it to Flight Mode during the test period.

Your phone needs to have an active connection to the mobile network to receive the alert and it may override Do Not Disturb and Silent Modes



# EMA FAQs

## No need to subscribe

There is no need for people to sign up or download an app. If a phone is on and capable of receiving them, it should get the alerts. People can check whether their phone can receive the alerts at [getready.govt.nz](http://getready.govt.nz) and should ensure their phone is on the most up to date operating system.

## Works by geo-targeting

Emergency Mobile Alerts will be targeted to areas under threat only. People outside the targeted broadcast area won't receive the alert.

## You can't opt out

As Emergency Mobile Alert is about keeping people safe, it isn't possible to opt-out. Some phones may show optional settings used in other countries, but in New Zealand we use a special broadcast channel that is permanently on.

## Who can send an Alert?

Emergency Mobile Alert messages can only be sent by the National Emergency Management Agency, Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups, NZ Police, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

## Don't ditch the radio

Emergency Mobile Alert is an additional channel to help keep New Zealand safe in an emergency and does not replace other alerting channels such as radio and social media, or the need to take action after natural warnings. If you feel your life may be in danger, don't wait for an official warning. Take immediate action. Remember – Long or Strong, Get Gone.

## Will Emergency Mobile Alert work if cell phone towers are damaged, or if there is a power outage?

Emergency Mobile Alert may not work if mobile phone towers are damaged or if there is a power outage.

Emergency Mobile Alert is an additional channel to help keep people safe in an emergency and does not replace other alerting systems or the need to take action after natural warnings.

## Will Emergency Mobile Alert work everywhere in New Zealand?

Emergency Mobile Alert should work in areas with cell reception. About 97% of populated areas get cell reception and work is being done by the mobile service operators to improve mobile coverage all the time.

## More Information

### **Emergency Mobile Alerts**

<https://getready.govt.nz/>

### **Emergency Mobile Alerts Capable Phones**

<https://getready.govt.nz/prepared/stay-informed/emergency-mobile-alert/capable-phones/>

### **Nationwide Emergency Mobile Alert Tests**

<https://getready.govt.nz/prepared/stay-informed/emergency-mobile-alert/nationwide-tests/>

### **Media: Who to Contact CDEM**

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/media/local-regional-media-contact-information>

### **How to Contact CDEM Groups**

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/find-your-civil-defence-group/>



**THANK YOU**

for helping us keep New Zealanders safe.



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