

Conducting Wireless Emergency Alert Tests

Alerting Authorities may perform **LIVE** tests of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) using the event code *Required Weekly Test (RWT)*. This offers the ability to assess WEA coverage and receipt within their jurisdictions without impacting the public.

Will the public receive the WEA test?

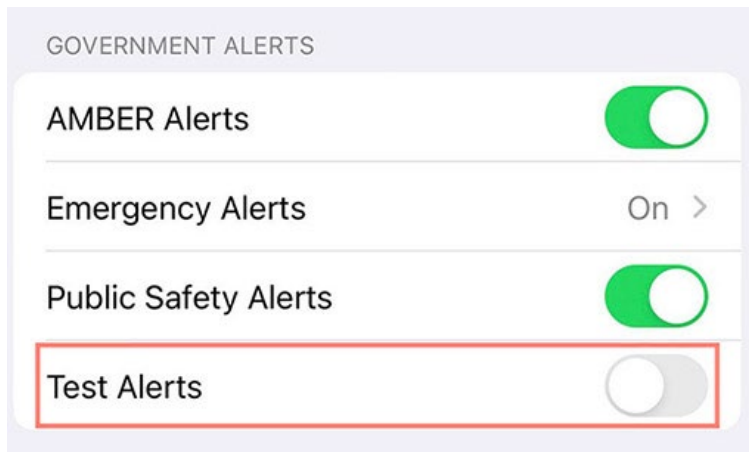
Mobile phones ship from the manufacturer with the test alerts option disabled. The user must enable this option to receive a WEA test. Some phones do not include a test option and cannot receive tests.

Some users among the public may have enabled the test option, so it is very important that all WEA test messages include text stating that the alert is a “test” (see below for examples).

How do I enable a phone to receive WEA tests?

iPhone

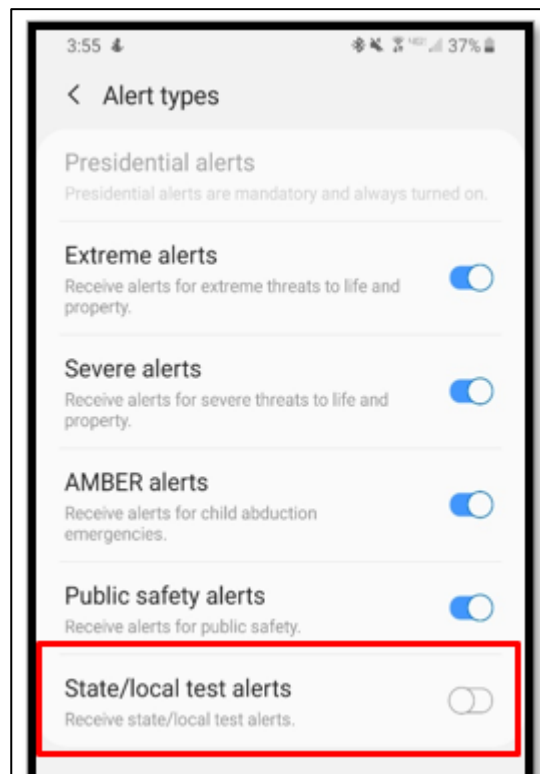
Apple devices running the latest versions of its operating systems include a Test Alerts switch in Settings > Notifications > Government Alerts.



Apple devices running earlier OS versions do not have this switch. They require entering a sequence of characters to enable or disable tests.

These are explained in the Apple support document [About emergency and government alerts on iPhone and Apple Watch](#).

Android



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Does “Required Weekly Test” mean that I need to send a WEA test every week?

No. The event code is simply titled “Required Weekly Test (RWT)” – which the Federal Communications Commission approved for use to test WEA. An Alerting Authority may utilize event code RWT to test WEA but should not perform live WEA tests on a weekly basis.

Is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Waiver required?

No. The FCC approved event code RWT for WEA tests and, therefore, does not require an FCC waiver.

Do I need other permissions?

You do not need permission from FEMA or the FCC, but you will want to get approval from your agency in accordance with your local policies and procedures.

Can I practice 90- and 360-character messages? English and Spanish?

Absolutely! We encourage testing all capabilities of WEA via an RWT. FEMA highly encourages use of the word “test” in all WEA test messages. For example,

90-character:

“This is a TEST of the Wireless Emergency Alert system. No action required.”

360-character:

“The [Agency Name] is performing a TEST of the Wireless Emergency Alert system. No action is required. Please provide feedback at [insert location for feedback].”

Can I include a polygon?

Yes. You can include a polygon and/or circle, but keep in mind that a polygon or circle should not be too small. A good rule of thumb is no smaller than two city blocks. In other words, do not expect success drawing a polygon around a single building.

Can I include URLs and phone numbers?

Yes. You can include URLs and/or phone numbers in the 90- and/or 360-character WEA text. Understand that URLs and phone numbers account for text and can easily reach the 90-character limit.

Consider using a URL shortening service to reduce character count. Some phones may not support clickable links.

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How do I know if the live WEA test was successful?

It is good practice to appoint test monitors to assess the WEA test. Monitors should:

- Enable their phones to receive the WEA test;
- Utilize different manufacturer phones and different cell service providers;
- Be placed in identified locations; and
- Provide feedback to include: Test received / Time and Location / Phone type and carrier.

Please note: Geo-targeting using a polygon is a desirable functionality of WEA, but device-based geo-fencing technologies have not been adopted by majority of mobile phones. Therefore, bleed-over outside of a polygon/circle should be expected.

If I do a LIVE WEA test, does it count for monthly required Proficiency Demonstration?

No. A live WEA test does not count for your required monthly proficiency test. You will still need to send your monthly test to the Technical Support Services Facility (TSSF) to retain your IPAWS authorization.

Can I incorporate a WEA test into exercises?

Yes. You can include a WEA test in small- to full-scale exercises. You will need to determine whether testing WEA makes sense for your exercise scenario(s). Then decide whether it is best to exercise WEA in a closed environment using only the IPAWS TSSF or activation of a live WEA test where test monitors may be utilized to assess receipt of the WEA test. For more information, please contact the IPAWS TSSF (below).

Can the IPAWS Technical Support Services Facility (TSSF) help me?

YES! IPAWS TSSF team members are knowledgeable in preparing for and executing WEA tests. They can provide guidance and recommendations for success.



The IPAWS TSSF is staffed 24/7 with subject-matter experts experienced in emergency management, public safety communications, public works, and broadcasting, ready to assist Alerting Authorities with IPAWS needs.

Phone: 1-84-IPAWSLab / 1-844-729-7522 fema-ipaws-lab@fema.dhs.gov

The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.