TIP #25: Deciding to Send a WEA?

Keep in Mind...

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) are a powerful tool in your alert and warning toolbox; WEA can reach most people in your jurisdiction, whether they are residents or visitors. Below are points to consider, both before and after you hit send.

Why mobile phones outside the alert area get a WEA

- Effective December 19th, wireless service providers participating in WEA began supporting enhanced geo-targeting of WEA messages in areas where the networks are technically capable of doing so.

- Enhanced geo-targeting is designed to deliver alerts to 100 percent of WEA-capable mobile phones inside the targeted alert area and should not alert mobile phones that are more than 1/10th of a mile (528 feet) outside the targeted alert area.

- How does it work? The new capability is based on location processing in the mobile phone itself. Wireless providers send the geographic information of the alert target area with the WEA message that is broadcast from cell sites near the targeted alert area. Upgraded mobile phones that receive a WEA with geographic information then use the device location functions to determine if the mobile phone is inside or outside of the targeted alert area.
  - Upgraded WEA-capable mobile phones will only display an alert if they are inside the targeted alert area
  - Standard WEA-capable mobile phones will display any alert received even if the mobile phone is outside of the targeted alert area

- Because mobile phones inside a targeted alert area may be connected to a cell site that is outside of the alert area, wireless service providers broadcast the WEA message from cell sites that are outside but near the targeted alert area. While this helps to maximize delivery of WEA to mobile phones inside the targeted alert area, it many times also results in alerting mobile phones outside the targeted alert area.
• Keep in mind, this technology is evolving and not all mobile phones are ready to support it. In time, all mobile phones and devices will support WEA enhanced geo-targeting either through software upgrades or when purchased new.

• Until such time, however, you should expect that mobile phones outside of the targeted alert area will also receive the WEA.

**Why mobile phones didn’t receive a WEA**

There will be cases where you may not receive a WEA. There are many reasons this may happen. Here are a few:

• You do not have adequate cell reception.

• Your mobile phone is turned off or set to airplane mode.

• Your mobile phone is not connected to a cell site broadcasting the alert; instead it could be synced to a cell site nearby that is not broadcasting the alert.

• Your mobile phone is connected to a cell site that is currently undergoing maintenance or is out of service.

• You have opted out of receiving alerts on your mobile phone. The location of the alerts opt in/out menu depends on the phone make and model, but typically is in the notification settings menu.

• Some mobile phones will not present an alert if the phone is being used for a call or in an active data session; this varies by make and model.

• If your mobile phone continues to receive the same WEA over and over it is most likely an issue with the device; mobile phones should ignore subsequent re-broadcasts of a WEA but sometimes a device gets stuck in a loop repeatedly alerting for the same WEA; powering off the device and turning it back on may help.

Disclaimer: This communication is provided by FEMA’s Integrated Public Alert and Warning System’s Program Management Office to highlight program announcements and does not endorse any non-government organizations, entities, or services.