



FEMA

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Intergovernmental Affairs Division
Telephone 202-646-3444

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY

FEMA, in partnership with NOAA, Announces Mobile Wireless Emergency Alerting Capabilities to be Available Nationwide through Participating Carriers

May 29, 2012

Hurricane Season begins June 1, 2012, and FEMA is providing additional tools for federal, state, local, tribal and territorial officials to alert and warn the public about severe weather. The Commercial Mobile Alert System, or CMAS, which is a part of FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, will be used to deliver Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to wireless carriers for distribution to the public.

The CMAS system will allow the National Weather Service to soon begin issuing WEAs for dangerous weather through participating wireless carriers directly to cell phones. The alerts will be broadcast by cell towers much like an AM/FM radio station, and cell phones within range will immediately pick up the signal, provided they are capable of receiving these alerts. The availability of WEA alerts will be dependent on the network status of the wireless carriers and handset availability, since not all cell phones can receive WEAs. Individuals should check with their [cellular carriers](#) to see if WEA alerts are available in their area.

WEAs will look like a text message, and will automatically appear on the mobile device screen showing the type and time of alert along with any action that should be taken. The message will be no more than 90 characters, and will have a unique tone and vibration, indicating a WEA has been received. If an alert is received, citizens should follow the instructions and seek additional information from radio, television, NOAA Weather Radio, and other official sources for emergency information. Citizens should only call 911 in a life threatening situation.

Only authorized federal, state, local, tribal or territorial officials can send WEA alerts to the public. As with all new cellular services, it will take time for upgrades in infrastructure, coverage, and handset technology to allow WEA alerts to reach all cellular customers.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact FEMA's Intergovernmental Affairs Division at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.