



Emergency Alert

Frequently Asked Questions

National Emergency Alert Telephone Warning System – Northern Territory

Please note, that in the event of an emergency, Territorians should tune into their battery powered radio for the latest official broadcasts. The introduction of this national system has not changed that advice.

Individuals should make plans for themselves and their families should an emergency occur. For more information on planning for emergencies in the Territory visit www.securent.nt.gov.au

What is National Emergency Alert?

Emergency Alert is a telephone warning system that may be used to send alerts via landline telephones based on the location of the handset, and to mobile phones, based on the billing address.

When will this system be operational in the Northern Territory?

The Emergency Alert is operational from 1 March 2010 following testing in the Palmerston region.

When will it be used?

It may be used in a life threatening, large scale emergency as defined by legislation. It would only be considered for use after emergency broadcasts have been issued through traditional media. It is important to get information to traditional media first so once people receive an SMS or recorded voice message, they can tune into local radio for details and unfolding updates.

It is unlikely to be used where a situation has considerable notice, such as a cyclone which is able to be closely tracked for 48 hours for example.

The system is being predominantly considered for emergencies such as tsunamis, and flash floods.

Who makes the decision to use Emergency Alert?

The Territory Controller, Regional Controllers or Director, Northern Territory Emergency Service.

Who flicks the switch?

The Emergency Alert will be issued from the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre in Berrimah.

Who decides what is said in the 160 characters in an SMS and 35 second recorded voice message?

Messages are built using pre-determined guidelines, with input from the hazard management authority and the Police Duty Superintendent.

I have an unlisted number - will I still get calls?

Yes, all phone numbers can be sent the emergency alert.

I have a pre-paid mobile phone – will I still get an alert?

An alert may be sent to the original address registered when you purchased the handset. You should check with your service provider what address they have registered for you and correct it if necessary.

Does it matter which phone carrier or network I'm with?

You may receive the alert regardless of who provides your telephone service.

Will alerts be sent out across the whole Territory?

Emergency alerts can be restricted to the area expected to be effected by the emergency through a mapping process. Essentially, a perimeter is drawn on an electronic map and all landlines and mobile phones with a billing address within that mapped area may receive an alert. If the billing address is not within the mapped area including a PO Box, then those phones will not receive the emergency alert. This is a significant consideration in terms of the effectiveness of this system for the rural and remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Will mobile phones jam in an emergency, preventing these messages from getting through?

There should be no significant delays, but there may be an impact if the carrier network is experiencing any network problems or congestion.

How will I know if the message/call is legitimate and not a hoax?

Caller ID number and message header will display the following number 0444 444 444. The message will reference where to go to get further information. Checking/validating through other sources eg radio, websites, neighbours etc will confirm the authenticity of the message.

What happens if you dial 0444 444 444?

If you dial the number there will be a recorded voice announcement informing the caller that the phone received an emergency warning message.

My child sometimes picks up the phone when it rings - how can I replay the call/message?

There is currently no call back option. This will be investigated as the system is further refined.

What happens if my children receive an alert on their mobile while at school?

If you provide your children with mobile phones, it is important to explain to them what to do if they receive an alert. If your child receives an alert when they are at school, they must follow the emergency management arrangements currently in place at their school.

What happens if my phone is engaged when the call goes out? Will they call back? How many times will it try?

The system is configured to have three attempts at getting the message through.

I have a fax on my phone line - will it keep dialling my fax?

On first attempt it recognises that it is a fax machine number it will no longer continue to try to send the message.

Can I 'opt out'?

No.

How many times will a telephone ring before the system assumes that there will be no answer?

45 secs

Will I be billed for the Emergency Alert message?

No, communities receiving messages will not be billed.

I frequently travel overseas with my mobile, will I get these messages while overseas or interstate?

If the phone has international roaming the message will be sent and received providing the handset is turned on.

Where can I find out more?

The National Emergency Alert website is the central point for more information on the system at www.emergencyalert.gov.au.

For general information to assist you and your family to prepare for emergencies in the Northern Territory, visit www.securent.nt.gov.au

Why did I not receive an alert?

There are a number of reasons why you may not receive an alert. These include:

Landline

1. If you are on your landline talking to someone
2. The system tries to call three times, if not answered you will not receive the message
3. If there is a power outage and you are relying on a phone that is cordless
4. Your property/phone line is not in the area defined by the emergency service organisation

Mobile phones

1. Your inbox is full
2. Your billing address is not in the area selected to receive a message
3. No mobile coverage/black spot area
4. Mobile phone is turned off
5. Prepaid mobile phones need to have accurate billing address registered to them