



TEXAS AMBER, BLUE, SILVER, ENDANGERED MISSING PERSONS, CAMO AND CLEAR ALERT PROGRAMS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATED TO CELL PHONE, TELEVISION AND RADIO NOTIFICATIONS

Cell Phones – Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

What is the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) system?

ANSWER: **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)** are part of a national public safety system that allows customers with WEA-capable mobile devices to receive notifications of local and state emergencies.

Phones must be WEA-capable and powered on to receive an alert. WEAs have a unique sound and vibration so that all recipients, including those with disabilities, receive notification of the situation.

1. **Presidential Alerts** – Alerts issued by the President or a designee.
2. **Emergency Alerts** – Issued by National Weather Service (NWS) and Public Safety officials during severe natural or manufactured disasters in which an imminent threat to life or property exists (e.g., tornadoes or dangerous flooding).
3. **Public Safety Alerts** - Issued by authorized Emergency Managers as an essential public safety advisory. These alert types may include Public Safety advisory messages such as "shelter in place" or "boil water" warnings.
4. **AMBER and Blue Alerts** – AMBER Alerts are issued by law enforcement as part of the search for a missing or abducted child, while Blue Alerts occur in situations where a law enforcement officer may be in danger and there is an attempt to find the suspect.

During an alert, WEA capable devices will receive a text-like message, vibration and an audible tone. WEA notifications involve technologies designed to avoid network congestion, with the ability to target specific geographical areas.

Why am I receiving alerts on my wireless device, when I did not subscribe?

ANSWER: All WEA capable wireless devices are automatically "opted-in" from factories.

How do I disable alerts on my wireless device?

ANSWER: You may only disable Emergency Alert and AMBER Alert notifications. Contact your wireless provider for further instructions, which may vary by phone model and wireless carrier.

Can I receive WEA text-like alerts without the audible tone?

ANSWER: Yes. Set your wireless device to silent or vibrate, however, be aware those settings will affect other wireless device functions.

Why did my wireless device not receive a WEA alert?

ANSWER: Only WEA capable wireless devices will receive an alert. Contact your wireless provider to determine if your phone model is “WEA capable”. If your device is “WEA capable” and you did not receive a notification, it is possible the alert area did not involve your geographical location.

Will WEA alerts disrupt text, calls or data sessions that are in progress?

ANSWER: No.

Will I receive WEA notifications on my wireless device for Silver, Endangered Missing Persons, Camo and CLEAR alerts?

ANSWER: No. The WEA system only supports Presidential, Emergency, Public Safety and AMBER/Blue alerts.

Is there a cost involved with receiving WEA alerts, or will the notifications count against my wireless plan limitations?

ANSWER: No. There is no cost to receive WEA notifications. Text messaging limits within your wireless plan are not affected.

Are WEA notifications considered text messages?

ANSWER: No. WEA notifications employ a new technology designed to avoid network congestion, however, appear on your wireless device similar to a text message.

Who issues WEA AMBER Alert notifications?

ANSWER: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issues all WEAs. AMBER Alert requests come from regional programs or the Texas Department of Public Safety to the National Center for Missing Exploited Children who then makes the request to FEMA. Blue Alert requests come from regional programs or the Texas Department of Public Safety to the Texas Division of Emergency Management who then makes the request to FEMA.

During what hours are WEA AMBER and Blue Alert notifications issued?

ANSWER: The state’s AMBER and Blue Alert networks, managed by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), has limited their issuance of WEA Alert notifications between the hours of 6:00 AM and 11:00 PM, to include holidays and weekends. WEA AMBER and Blue Alert hours of notification (initiated by Texas regional alert networks) could differ.

How many times will I be notified of a single child abduction incident via the WEA system?

ANSWER: Only once, unless there are updates, in order to prevent public desensitization. However, if you travel into a new area after an alert is first sent, your WEA-capable device may receive new messaging.

Why are WEA messages short and have limited information?

ANSWER: WEA alert messages are limited to 360-character limit on 4G LTE networks and beyond. (to include spaces). Due to not all networks being 4G LTE or higher, DPS limits alerts to 90-characters to accommodate older networks.

Why am I receiving WEA AMBER alerts, regarding a child abduction that did not take place in my city/county? Are WEA AMBER alerts always issued statewide?

ANSWER: State-issued WEA AMBER alerts in Texas are issued statewide. The two primary reasons are (1) a criminal action has occurred and (2) the suspects are most of the time rapidly transporting the abducted children. Other alert areas may be localized, based on geographical areas determined by investigative case information and issues relating to the actual child abduction.

Who do I contact if I see the vehicle?

ANSWER: Immediately call “9-1-1”, or your local law enforcement agency.

Television & Radio – Emergency Alert System (EAS)

*(To include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
All Hazards Weather Radio.)*

What is the Emergency Alert System (EAS)?

ANSWER: The EAS serves as a national public warning system, requiring broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio services (SDARS) providers, and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers to allow the President to address the public during national emergencies. State and local authorities may also use the EAS to alert the public of specific emergencies, to include severe weather, AMBER and Blue alerts.

Why am I receiving alerts on my television/radio, when I did not subscribe?

ANSWER: It is a requirement by law that broadcasters and television stations interrupt programming, in order to notify the public of specific emergencies.

Why are the alerts so loud on my television?

ANSWER: The sound is loud so it will cut through audio clutter and environmental noise as well as giving individuals with hearing loss at specific frequencies the ability to hear the alert.

How do I disable alerts on my television/radio?

ANSWER: This is not possible if your television/radio is receiving network broadcasts.

Why did my television/radio not receive an EAS alert?

ANSWER: It is possible the alert area did not involve your geographical location.

Will I receive EAS notifications on my television/radio for Silver, Endangered Missing Persons, Camo and Clear alerts?

ANSWER: No. The EAS system only supports AMBER and Blue alerts in regards to missing person alerts.

Who issues EAS AMBER Alert notifications?

ANSWER: The state's AMBER Alert network, managed by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), has an agreement with the National Weather Service (NWS) to activate the EAS system during AMBER and Blue Alerts issued by DPS, on behalf of law enforcement. Regional AMBER and Blue Alert networks in Texas could also form an agreement with the National Weather Service, or a local primary radio station with the ability to activate the EAS system in their region.

During what hours are EAS AMBER Alert notifications issued?

ANSWER: 24/7, to include holidays and weekends.

How many times will I be notified of a single child abduction incident via the EAS system?

ANSWER: Only once, in order to prevent public desensitization.

Why am I receiving EAS AMBER alerts, regarding a child abduction that did not take place in my city/county? Are EAS AMBER Alerts always issued statewide?

ANSWER: Yes, all issued EAS AMBER alerts in Texas are statewide. Investigated case information determines the AMBER alert geographical areas. The selected alert area could represent a large geographical region due to suspects sometimes utilizing vehicles to transport a child rapidly.

Who do I contact if I see the vehicle, child or suspect?

ANSWER: Immediately call "9-1-1", or your local law enforcement agency.