



How to Receive Notifications in an Emergency

It is important that residents know how public safety officials will make notifications and provide instruction to the public during emergency situations. There are several options residents have to sign up for notifications to be informed no matter where they live, work, play, or attend school. We have listed several systems that Putnam County residents can sign up to receive emergency notifications from during severe weather events and other emergencies in Putnam County.

New York State developed NY-ALERT to serve as the authoritative gateway for sending and receiving warnings and alerts to the citizens of New York State during times of emergency. A single message can be sent out via numerous messaging gateways simultaneously. Notification can be broadcast via cell calls, text and email, providing the most comprehensive notification system available. In addition to allowing citizens to sign up to receive specific alerts, NY-ALERT also can be used by municipalities to disseminate emergency messages via reverse 911 phone calls to households within a specified jurisdiction. Residents can sign up for NY-Alert by logging on to (<https://www.nyalert.gov>). NY-Alert is an intuitive site that allows users to customize the categories and severity levels of alerts they would like to receive.



Code Red – This is a notification system provided by Entergy for use during emergencies at the Indian Point Power Plants. Entergy has made this system available to Putnam for use in other emergencies. It is a manually operated warning system that we have used many times to make calls to land-line phones in a particular geographic area. We have used it for lost persons, hazardous materials spills, criminal / law enforcement activity in specific areas. Voice messages can be sent out by County Emergency Services personnel and the system can call every land-line phone in the affected area. Residents can sign on to register their cell phones to receive these messages as well.



Outdoor Warning Sirens – The western portion of Putnam County lies within the 10 mile radius of Indian Point Nuclear Plants. This area is known as the Emergency Planning Zone and has unique sounding sirens mounted on poles located in various spots that would sound during an emergency at the Power Plants. The sirens are not a signal to evacuate. They are intended to alert residents of an emergency and that they should tune into an Emergency Alert System (EAS) radio or TV station to get information about the situation and to receive instructions about what actions to take.



Emergency Alert System (EAS) – Is a national warning system that sends emergency messages through local TV and radio stations. Used for severe weather alerts and can be utilized for other events.



NOAA Weather Alert Radio – A radio that is specifically designed to receive warnings from the National Weather Service (NWS) and triggers an alarm on the radio. If you purchase the correct radio, you can tailor the alerts to sound for specific counties and weather conditions that you wish to be notified about. These radios can be purchased at locations like Amazon and Radio Shack.



Other sources of emergency alerts that you can sign up for include weather alerts from The Weather Channel or Accu-Weather.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) – Emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile phone carrier. Messages are in the form of texts that are usually accompanied by an audible tone. Federal, state and local government agencies can send out messages such as AMBER alerts and severe weather warnings. If you have a relatively new cell phone, your equipment is already set up to receive these messages. No sign-up is needed.



Cell Phones and Texting in Disasters



If you are separated from your family and friends during a disaster, it can be a very scary thing. You want them to know you are okay, and vice versa. Cell phones have become an invaluable tool to us. In an emergency there are many ways a cell phone can be a great asset; you store your important phone numbers in it, you can use it for a flashlight and you can access social media networks. Remember to conserve your battery, and always have a charger handy, especially a car charger. Another important point to remember is that during a disaster, the profound increase in cell phone traffic may make it very difficult for you to get a call through. In that case, try texting instead, because in many cases a text may go through where a phone call wouldn't. At the present time, you cannot send a text to 9-1-1.