



# Delaware County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

## How to Receive Communications in an Emergency

There are many ways to receive alerts in Delaware County. It is important that everyone is aware of how to receive communications in a crisis/emergency situation no matter where they live, work, play or go to school. Communications and information are key to your safety during a disaster. Below, we will discuss the pros and cons of several methods of communications that are available in Delaware County.

**Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)** – Emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile carrier. Government partners including local and state public safety agencies, FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, and the National Weather Service may send alerts related to extreme weather, AMBER Alerts, Presidential Alerts during a national emergency.



Can be used by local first responders for local occurrences. No sign up required. Severe weather alerts are automatic via the NWS. Instantaneous reception as the message is broadcast out from cell towers using admin lines. There is no calls per minute limit. Can be targeted to an area based on your cell carrier. If you have phone reception, you will receive the alert for the area, it is based on where the phone is located not your home/work address. If you are traveling through Indiana and a warning is issued for that area in Indiana, you will receive the warning. Can be used as a warning device indoors.



Must be a newer cell phone with the capability built into the device. Only text, no voice.

**Emergency Alert System (EAS)** – Is an alert that is sent to TV and radio stations. Used for severe weather alerts and can be utilized for other events.



Weather requires no first responder action. No sign-up required; you only need to be within hearing distance of a turned on TV or radio tuned correctly. Can be used as a warning device indoors.



You must have a TV or Radio tuned to a local channel. Sometimes cable channels or satellite TV will not rebroadcast the EAS message. Also satellite radio also will not have EAS.



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**Text/ Email Alerts from Sources** - You can receive weather alerts to your email or your mobile phone from several sources. A few trustworthy sources: The Weather Channel, WSYX ABC 6/Fox 28, WCMH NBC 4 and WBNS TV 10.



Automatic with no responder input. It is broadcast instantly. Can be used as a warning device indoors.



Must have the device on hand: if you are in front of the computer with email open (email alerts only, except for smart phones). Activated for any tornado warning in Delaware County, thus not targeted. Alerts only for the county you enter, thus if you travel it will not alert. You must sign up to receive the alerts.

**DelcoAlerts**– Manually operated warning system controlled locally that communicates through mobile phones, text message and email information that residents have entered into DelcoAlerts. Used for severe weather, civil unrest, evacuation, etc...



You listen to an actual voice message given by a local emergency response person. No sign up required for land lines that are listed numbers.



Weather notifications are not available through landline telephones. You will only receive a notification based on the location entered into DelcoAlert database. An example would be if your home address was entered into the database the notification will be for that address.

**Outdoor Warning Sirens** – Siren on a pole located in various spots throughout the county manually launched locally. Used for tornado warnings or could be used for other warnings such as a hazardous materials spill or terrorism.



Requires no sign-up; if you can hear it you know to go indoors for information.



Designed ONLY TO BE HEARD OUTDOORS. You must be located very close to the siren to hear indoors. If you are indoors with the windows shut, AC on, TV on, and kids in the house – you would not have received the warning unless you live right next door to the siren. Activated for any tornado warning in Delaware County, thus not targeted to a certain area. Does not have county-wide coverage as a limited number of sirens exist in the County.



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**NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR)** is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts official Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We suggest a radio that uses SAME technology. SAME, or Specific Alert Message Encoding allows you to specify the particular area for which you wish to receive alerts. Most warnings and watches broadcast over NOAA Weather Radio are county-based or independent city-based (parish-based in Louisiana), although in a few areas of the country the alerts are issued for portions of counties. Since most NWR transmitters are broadcasting for a number of counties, SAME receivers will respond only to alerts issued for the area (or areas) you have selected. This minimizes the number of “false alarms” for events which might be a few counties away from where you live.



Automatic, requires no local emergency responder action. Can be heard as a warning device indoors. If you purchase the correct radio, you can tailor it to various counties and silence certain alarms to be notified only under the conditions you wish to be notified. Handheld radios are also available. Used primarily for weather events; however change is occurring to use for more warnings.



Activated for any tornado warning in Delaware County, thus not targeted to a specific area.

## Common Sense, Practical Preparedness

If Delaware County were hit by a blizzard and you found it necessary to be confined to your home for a period of three days (72 hours) would you have enough food, medicine, infant formula, pet supplies, batteries and other important day to day items? In Ohio, there are very few times, if ever, you would be confined to your home for a period of three days or more. A kit that would get you through a week or more would cost around \$300 to make and would have to be restocked every 6 months or so. What we suggest is common sense, practical preparedness. Chances are good that you would have enough food, water and everyday supplies to get you through a three day period. Keep your pantry stocked, have enough batteries on hand to run your flashlights and battery powered televisions, be sure you have enough medicine to last 3 days. Being prepared doesn't have to be scary or expensive. Don't forget you can get water from your hot water tank in an emergency, too!

## 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. Many shelters or libraries offer 'charging stations' where you can go to charge your computers and phones. Texting is 800 times more likely to go through than a voice call. After the Derecho in June 2012, many people



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ere having a hard time getting phones calls to go through, this is where texting becomes an important part of communications because a text may go through where a phone call wouldn't. At this time, you cannot text 9-1-1.

## Social Media in Emergencies

Social media networks help keep communications open during disaster situations. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are some of the social networking tools you can use for fun, business or should disaster strike. If a disaster should happen, phone lines can go down and communication can be sporadic. Many people rely on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook for up to date information, keep in mind every 'tweet' you read may not be from a reliable source. Always get your information from a source you can trust such as your local emergency management agency or news stations.

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