

Learning Guide for Students on Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs)

Learning Objectives

Students will...

- Be able to explain what a wireless emergency alert is, including **why** they are sent, **who** sends them and **what** they look like.
- Understand the types of alerts and warnings.
- Know that WEAs have a unique alert tone and vibration signal.
- Be able to inform parents or guardians of how to find out if their cell phone receives WEAs.
- Know what to do if they receive a WEA message.

Openers

- Begin with the FEMA Ad-Council Public Service Announcement to hear the unique sound of a WEA. See: <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/videos/82630>.
- Ask how many students have a cell phone? What about your parents or guardians?
- Have you ever gotten a wireless emergency alert? Tell me about it... or if not...OK we're going to learn about them today.

Key Facts for Educators

- Wireless Emergency Alerts, or WEAs, are free messages sent directly to your cell phone. They warn about severe weather, AMBER alerts for children, and threats to safety. WEA messages are sent to cell phones in the area affected by the emergency.
- You do not have to subscribe. WEAs may already be enabled on your wireless cell phone or tablet.
- WEAs are designed to get your attention and alert you with a unique sound and vibration. Sound example: <http://youtu.be/UG2KibwhijM>. [NOTE: do you have a recording of the vibration to play?]
- WEAs will show: event type (what); area affected (where); recommended action; expiration time (when); and sending agency (who).
- WEAs are sent to you by state and local public safety officials, the National Weather Service, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the President.
- If you receive a WEA, get more information from other sources, such as radio or TV.
- All major cell phone providers are participating in WEA. This includes AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile and Sprint. [In case a student asks...some prepaid phone providers, like Metropolitan Personal Communication Service, also participate in WEA.]
- To find out if your cell phone can receive WEA alerts, asks a parent/guardian to call their wireless phone company.

Activity 1: True or False (verbal)

- WEA messages are text messages that warn about an emergency. [TRUE]

- You can receive a WEA on your home phone, TV or radio. [FALSE]
- Only the President of the United States can send a WEA. [FALSE]
- A WEA may warn you about a flood or other natural hazard. [TRUE]
- A WEA will only warn you about natural hazards. [FALSE] Follow-up question: What else might a WEA warn you about? [Missing child or AMBER alert, local emergency in your neighborhood]
- When you received a WEA message it will sound and vibrate differently from a regular text message [TRUE]
- You should ignore WEA messages. [FALSE] Never! Ask the students to tell you what they should do.

Activity 2

Words to Know – Read each clue and fill in the blank.

1. Wireless emergency alerts are emergency messages sent to your _____ . (cell phone)
2. Wireless emergency alerts can warn you about a _____ in your area. (potential hazard)
3. Wireless emergency alerts look like a _____ on your phone. (text message)
4. A missing child alert is an _____ alert. (AMBER)
5. Your parents should check with the _____ to see if their cell phone can receive alerts. (wireless provider). Name a wireless provider: Sprint, AT&T, etc.