

# Emergency Communications

Accurate information allows you to make *informed* decisions.



## ***What information do I need in an emergency?***

- Nature of the emergency: "What's going on?"
- Severity: "How bad is it?"
- Areas affected: "Where is it happening?"
- Estimated duration: "How long will it last?"
- Evacuate or shelter-in-place: "Should I stay or go?"
- Additional instructions from authorities: "What else?"
- Status of family members: "How and where is everyone?"
- Status of neighbors: "We're OK. How can I help others?"

**WATCH: Be Prepared.** Issued well in advance to alert the public of the possibility of a particular weather-related hazard (e.g., tornado watch, flash flood watch). Occurrence, location, and timing may still be uncertain.

**ADVISORY: Be Aware.** Issued for weather that causes significant inconveniences and if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations. Significant events are occurring, imminent, or have a very high probability of occurrence.

**WARNING: Take Immediate Action!** Issued when a weather or flood hazard is imminent or already occurring (e.g., tornado warning, flash flood warning). Conditions are posing a threat to life or property.

## Emergency Information Sources

**Emergency Alert System (EAS):** Standard AM/FM radio.

**Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA):** Emergency alerts sent to mobile phones in a specific geographical area.

**NOAA weather radio and tone alert radio:** Receives notifications for weather hazards and other non-weather alerts. Visit [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/) for more information.

**Social media:** Follow state, county, city, law

enforcement, fire rescue, and other emergency response and management authorities in your area on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media.

**Highway message boards:** Watch for alerts and messages about safety, road hazards, and alternate routes.

**Route alerting:** Response personnel go to neighborhoods and give emergency information via loud-speaker or door-to-door.

***Know the emergency communications plans for your city, schools, and places of employment.***

✓ **Make a Plan** ✓ **Get a Kit** ✓ **Be Informed** ✓ **Get Involved**  
For more preparedness information: [waldocountyme.gov/ema](http://waldocountyme.gov/ema)



# Family Communication Plan

## Out-of-State Emergency Contact

It is often easier to call long distance after an emergency or disaster because local phone-lines and cell towers are usually overwhelmed. Establish and practice using an out-of-state emergency contact. If not at home when the incident happens, all members of the household call the out-of-state contact and report his or her **status and location**. This allows the head of the house to call the out-of-state contact and get an accounting of all household members.

- Get permission from your contact beforehand and let them know what their role is.
- Make sure everyone knows who the contact is and when they need to be called.
- Volunteer to be your contact's emergency out-of-state contact.
- Sometimes text messages or emails can get through when a phone connection cannot.

## Emergency Meeting Places

An important part of the family communication plan is knowing what to do if an emergency happens when family members are not at home. Have two or more predetermined emergency meeting places where your family can reunite if going home is not an option.

**Outside Home Emergency Meeting Place:** Choose some place that is a safe distance from your home in case of fire, but still within sight of your home. Choose a specific spot — not the park across the street, but a particular park bench, tree, or other permanent landmark. Not the house at the corner, but the south corner of their driveway. Teach young children to stay there until a parent or another

trusted adult arrives. Depending on age and ability of the children, you may want to have the meeting place on the same side of the street as your home to avoid having children crossing the street during the chaos of a house fire or other emergency with quickly arriving first responders.

**Outside Neighborhood Emergency Meeting Place:** It needs to be far enough away to be out of the immediate neighborhood, but close enough that it can be walked to if necessary. Probably around two or three miles. Again, choose a specific location. Aunt Judy's house or the north side of the church on Main Street.

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