



Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and AlertSanDiego: Complimentary systems, why are they both important?



	WEA	AlertSanDiego
Recipients	WEA is a public safety system that allows customers who own certain wireless phones and other enabled mobile devices to receive geographically-targeted, text-like messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area. A map is drawn of the notification area, and cell towers within the area broadcast the WEA message.	AlertSanDiego emergency messages are received by all listed and unlisted landline numbers in an affected targeted area, along with any cell phones and email addresses in that area that have registered their address into the system. AlertSanDiego contacts landlines and registered cell phones, whether or not they are WEA-capable, along with its email and text capability. Registrants can also sign up to receive their messages in Accessible formats such as American Sign Language.
Message	WEA messages arrive with a unique tone and vibration, distinguishing it from a text message or other normal phone notification. The message is limited to 90 characters and can include a web link but not images. The message is broadcast on a special channel and will not be impacted by cell phone congestion during an emergency.	AlertSanDiego emergency messages arrive as voice calls, texts, and emails and adhere to your phone's notification settings such as mute, vibrate, and ringtone. Voice calls and emails can provide more detailed information. Accessible AlertSanDiego registrants receive their notifications as American Sign Language videos. Text messages are limited to 160 characters.
Registration	Registration is not required for WEA messages. WEA-capable and most newer phones are designed to receive these messages.	Cell phones, VoIP phones, and email addresses can be registered at www.readysandiego.org/alertsandiego . Listed and unlisted landline phones are already in the system.
Speed	WEA messages are short (90 characters), and can be broadcast quickly to all WEA-capable cell phones within range of a WEA broadcasting tower. The system doesn't work off of a database, but sends out the alert to everything in range of the broadcasting tower. WEA messages can be set so that recipients that weren't in the notification area when the alert was first sent, receive it when they enter the area.	AlertSanDiego messages depend on the speed and capacity of landline and cell phone infrastructure. This mass notification system calls each individual landline and registered cell number in the targeted area. This may take the message longer to distribute, but it allows for the message to contain more detailed information.



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Accuracy	<p>In San Diego County, all major wireless carriers are able to broadcast WEA messages at the cell tower level. This allows officials to only broadcast the message from select cell towers in the area of the emergency. By selecting these towers, WEA-capable phones connected to them will receive the alerts, potentially including those outside the affected area. All WEA recipients should seek additional information from local media and/or public safety officials.</p>	<p>AlertSanDiego uses the county's 911 database for all landline numbers, associating them to their physical residential or business address. The system can be used to notify streets, blocks, neighborhoods, and even communities or whole cities.</p> <p>Cell, VoIP, and email users need to accurately register their own street address (for home, work, school, etc.) into the AlertSanDiego database, which maps them alongside the landline phone numbers.</p>
Usage	<p>WEA is a powerful notification tool and will only be used by local officials for emergency notifications. One of its greatest strengths is that it is not tied to an address, but to you and your cell phone's proximity to a threat. WEA goes with you. Additionally, San Diego has many short term residents from student, military, and tourist communities that may not know they can register with AlertSanDiego. If a WEA message is warranted public safety officials must consider WEA's 90 character limit, the nature of the emergency, the size of the notification area, and if more efficient and effective notification methods exist. <u>For large events, public safety officials may use both WEA and AlertSanDiego.</u></p>	<p>Because of AlertSanDiego's ability to target very specific areas, with in-depth information about the emergency, AlertSanDiego is often used for small to medium size events. It's used for emergency messages such as gas leaks, evacuation orders, boil water orders, and other emergency messaging where targeted emergency information is needed. <u>For large events, public safety officials may use both WEA and AlertSanDiego.</u></p>