

June 2014

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Receive Warnings, Weather or Not

Summer will soon be here and the weather has been great this spring. Summertime activities are beginning and people want to enjoy the nice weather and extended daylight hours. However, weather can change quickly this time of year and summertime can be a time for wildfires and floods. Receiving emergency messages from the National Weather Service (NWS) will help keep people and their outdoor activities safe. A NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a great addition to an alert and warning system for any person, home or business.



People are more “plugged in” than ever before with the near constant presence of smartphones, radios, tablets, computers and television. It’s hard to imagine a time when a weather warning wouldn’t come over one of these forms of media. But, there are times when people do unplug or sleep. The NWR, which usually is quiet, will sound an alarm or tone to let the owner know important information is about to follow. It fills the warning gap when nothing else is on and provides an alarm to alert a person when other things are competing for attention. Weather is not the only situation that may need rapid notification to the public. NWR broadcasts warnings and post event information for all types of hazards. Whether it is a natural (earthquake, flood, wildfire) or human-caused (terrorism, chemical spill) event or an AMBER Alert, critical information will be delivered through this device. It is an important part of the Federal Communication Commission’s Emergency Alert System (EAS).



Which Radio Is Right For You?

There are multiple manufacturers producing these radios at a variety of prices. The number of features will vary, but a key



factor is that the radio complies with all the Public Alert Standards developed by the Consumer Electronics Association. These radios will have one or both of the logos (Public Alert, NOAA) on the product. Features to look for in a Residential Grade Radio include the following.

Tone Alarm	NWS will send a 1050 Hz tone alarm before broadcasting most warnings and many watch messages. The alarm will activate all the receivers equipped to receive it, even if the audio is turned off. This is especially useful for warnings during the night. <i>(Public Alert™ - required)</i>
SAME Technology	SAME , or Specific Alert Message Encoding allows you to specify the particular area for which you wish to receive alerts. This minimizes the number of “false alarms” for events which might be a few counties away from where you live. <i>(Public Alert™ - required)</i>
Battery Backup	Power outages often occur during storms so having a battery backup is very important. Units used inside buildings should remain plugged into a power source to preserve battery life, radios used solely as portable units maybe battery only. <i>(Public Alert™ - required)</i> .
External Antenna Jack	Most receivers come with an extendable whip antenna to improve reception, but depending on location, an additional external antenna may be needed. Some receivers come with an external antenna jack to connect a larger antenna for either indoor or outdoor use. These antennas can often be purchased from the same retailers that sell the radios.
External Device Jack - Special Needs	Some radios have a jack to plug-in external notification devices, such as strobe lights or bed shakers, which can be useful for those with special needs. This feature is required for <i>Public Alert™</i> certification of institutional units and optional for residential.

Tune And Test: All radios should come with instructions that walk the user through set-up, allowing for country, state and county designations. Every Wednesday at noon the radio should tone and provide a test message. For more information on Weather Alert Radios go to: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/faq.htm>

