



[FEMA Debuts New Emergency Messaging System Direct to Your Cell Phone](#)

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Everyone recognizes those Emergency Alerts on television – suddenly, your program is interrupted by a series of beeps that are followed by an announcement that you’re not to worry: it’s just a test of the emergency announcement system. This is a Test. This is only a Test.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Debuts Emergency Alert System for Your Phone.

[FEMA \(Federal Emergency Management Agency\)](#) has just announced that it will be providing Americans with a text message emergency alert system. It’s named the “[Personal Localized Alerting Network](#)” or [PLAN](#). (You can get all the details in the [FEMA May 2011 Press Release](#).)

Under **PLAN**, cell phone customers who opt for this service and have an enabled mobile device will be able to get text messages targeting their location (geographic region) and alerting them with details regarding any imminent threats in their area. Think tornado. Think flood.

FEMA is using cell towers in the various locations to target the cell phones in that location. There will be [3 kinds of alerts](#) sent through the chosen cell towers:

1. alerts from the President;
2. alerts involving threats to life and safety; and
3. Amber Alerts.

Right now, the agency is mandating that the technology be available nationwide by April 2012. AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon have already announced that they will start offering PLAN to their customers shortly. (It’s a free app.) [New York City will run the beta](#) – Mayor Bloomberg has already announced that PLAN will be available to New Yorkers before Christmas 2011.

Legal Impact Still Unknown in Injury Cases

Yes, this is a good idea. However, will it have any impact on duty under the law? If your cell phone got a text message that a tornado was in the vicinity, then will insurance defense attorneys argue in the future that you're the proximate cause of failing to get out of harm's way in time?