

PREPAREDNESS: NOAA WEATHER RADIO

<http://www.weather.gov/nwr/>

NOAA Weather Radio is a service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. As the "Voice of the National Weather Service," NOAA NWR provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from National Weather Service offices.

Recorded weather messages are repeated every four to six minutes and routinely revised every one to three hours. If necessary, they can be repeated more frequently. NOAA Weather Radio includes 1,000 transmitters covering all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the U.S. Pacific Territories, along with coastal waters. Stations operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day, with broadcasts specifically tailored to the weather needs of the listening area. The area is usually within 40 miles of the transmitter.

Most weather radios have an alert feature, which activates an alarm and turns on the radio when severe weather threatens. This provides listeners critical, potentially life-saving, messages. It also provides quick notification about approaching threats to schools, hospitals, nursing homes or businesses, giving them extra time for safety. An excellent location for the radio would be at a desk or switchboard where the radio can be monitored during all operating hours.

Since most NWRs serve an area of several counties, the alarm feature may activate frequently during very active severe weather in one particular area. People who are not in the affected area can become annoyed with alarms not related to their county. They may see the solution as turning off the radio. Fortunately, there is another way of dealing with this issue. An enhancement called the "Specific Area Message Encoder" or "SAME" allows listeners to program their radios to alarm only for the county or counties they are interested in.

NWR has become an even more valuable tool to the community as an "all hazards" radio network. In addition to being the most complete and comprehensive source of weather forecasts, advisories, watches and warning information, it can now broadcast warning and post-event information for a host of other threats. These include natural hazards, such as earthquakes, wildfires and volcanic activity, as well as technological hazards, chemical releases, toxic spills, nuclear power plant emergencies or even a national emergency.

If a community or state requests it, NWR can broadcast AMBER alerts for missing children. The state of Texas has issued several AMBER alerts via NWR. In one case, the driver who located the suspect vehicle actually learned about the abduction from an NWR broadcast while he was listening for information on a flooding threat. NWR has continued to expand in coverage and capability, making it an invaluable tool for the public as well as emergency planners. It is critical to make sure NWRs are located in hospitals, schools, places of worship and nursing homes. They also are needed in restaurants, stores, recreation centers, office buildings, sports facilities, theaters, bus and train stations, airports and other public places. For as little as \$20, anyone can have access to potentially life-saving emergency messages whenever and wherever needed.