



Ministry of
Emergency Management
and Climate Readiness

BC Emergency Alerts

Community Alerting: Emergency Operations Guidelines

**Information for First Nations and Local Governments
Issuing Alerts**

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Version history

April 2022	Original guidelines published
July 2022	Updated Emergency Alert Submission form added
September 2022	Updated Emergency Alert Submission form
November 2022	Updated ECC phone number and Completing the Emergency Alert Submission form
February 2023	Updated link to the web form
May 2023	Updated to reflect Spring 2023 alerting program updates

SECTION 1:

BC EMERGENCY ALERT GUIDELINES



1 Identify threat to life

Is a BC Emergency Alert required?

- Is there a threat to life?
- Is the threat immediate?
- Are there recommended actions that may save lives?
If yes, fill out an Emergency Alert Submission form (time permitting) and proceed to step 2



2 Call the ECC at 1-800-663-3456

What info does EMCR need from you?

- Tell them you want to send out a BC Emergency Alert
- If there is no time to fill out an Emergency Alert Submission form, tell them:
 - What area in your community is in danger
 - What instructions you need to give the public



3 Coordinate with EMCR

During the call with EMCR you will be asked:

- To provide your identity
- To confirm alert message details, including geographic boundaries



4 EMCR sends out BC Emergency Alert

EMCR sends out BC Emergency Alert to the public

- Alert is sent to wireless devices on LTE or 5G networks, radio and TV in the impacted area
- Alert is in effect until it is cancelled or updated

Below is a sample of the PDF version of the BC Emergency Alert Submission (EAS) form. Please see page 14 for instructions on accessing and submitting the form.

BC EMERGENCY ALERT - Submission Form



Ministry of
Emergency Management
and Climate Readiness

Email the completed form to: emergencyalertrequest@gov.bc.ca or fill out a web version of this form here:

<https://submit.digital.gov.bc.ca/app/form/submit?f=6e886414-fe32-41de-9c97-284ec354b652>

Call ECC at 1-800-663-3456 to initiate alert

Alert Information (*Required)			
<p>Confirm the BI alert criteria are met</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> There is a threat to human life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The threat is immediate</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> There are recommended actions that may save lives</p>	<p>Alert Type</p> <p><input type="radio"/> New</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Update</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Cancel</p>	<p>Alert Method</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Cell Phone</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Radio/TV</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Both Cell Phone and Radio/TV</p>	
Submitter Information (*Required)			
Submission Type			
<p><input type="radio"/> Single First Nation/Local Authority - record submitter information below</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Joint submission from multiple First Nations/Local Authorities - record all submitters on page 2 of this form</p>			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
Area to be Alerted (*Required)			
If map of area to be alerted is available, email map image with completed EAS form. Alternatively describe area to be alerted below (e.g radius and centerpoint of circle, points of polygon, street names, etc.)			
Alert Content (*Required)			
Describe alert message by filling in text between <> symbols			
Headline	BC EMERGENCY ALERT issued by <name of submitting jurisdiction(s)> due to <Hazard>.		
Area Description	<Evacuate or shelter in place> immediately if you are in the following area: <describe area under threat>.		
Event Description	The <event name, type or location> poses a threat to human life.		
Instructions	<Evacuation instructions or shelter in place instructions> If you are unable to evacuate call 9-1-1.		
Will be included if Cell Phone alert: Click for more info: www.EmergencyInfoBC.ca/EventPageName . Will be included if Radio/TV alert: Visit www.EmergencyInfoBC.ca for more information.			
Total Character Count	407	Max. 600 characters	

Version 6 (May 2023)

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BC EMERGENCY ALERT - Submission Form

Email the completed form to: emergencyalertrequest@gov.bc.ca or fill out a web version of this form here:

<https://submit.digital.gov.bc.ca/app/form/submit?f=6e886414-fe32-41de-9c97-284ec354b652>

Call ECC at 1-800-663-3456 to initiate alert

Additional Submitter Information (*Required for multi-jurisdiction submissions only)			
If form is being jointly submitted by multiple First Nations and/or Local Authorities, provide all other submitter details below.			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
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First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
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First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			

SECTION 2:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT BC EMERGENCY ALERTS

Introduction: BC Emergency Alerts

This guide contains practical information First Nations and Local Governments will need to issue a BC Emergency Alert.

How to use this guide

This guide is divided into two sections. The first section provides information First Nations and local governments will need during an emergency when issuing a BC Emergency Alert. The second section provides additional information about the alerting process.

What is a BC Emergency Alert?

BC Emergency Alerts are emergency alert messages that reach the public through wireless devices and by interrupting regular TV and radio programs. They were previously called Broadcast Intrusive Alerts. These messages are only sent when there is an immediate and life-threatening danger. Messages are sent using the national system called Alert Ready.

When can a BC Emergency Alert be issued?

BC Emergency Alerts can be issued to warn the public about a life-threatening hazard such as flooding, wildfire, tsunami or an extreme heat emergency. Three criteria must be met for a BC Emergency Alert to be issued:

1. There is a threat to human life.
2. The threat is immediate.
3. There are recommended actions that may save lives.

Emergency Alerts are also used by RCMP for Amber Alerts and civil emergencies, and by Environment and Climate Change Canada for extreme weather events.

What other alerting and notification tools are available?

Communities will continue to use existing alerting tools and be responsible for public alerting during emergencies. BC Emergency Alerts provide another tool to use during emergencies, but do not replace other types of emergency alerting tools such as sirens, door-to-door notifications, social media, news media, or mass notification systems.

Key contacts

To request a BC Emergency Alert, call the Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Emergency (EMCR) Coordination Centre (ECC) at 1-800-663-3456. This line is answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you have general questions about the BC Emergency Alert process, or would like to request guidance or additional information, please reach out to the EMCR office in your region.

Southwest Region

14292 Green Timbers Way
Surrey, B.C. V3T 0J4
Tel: 604-586-4390
Fax: 604-586-4334
Email: EMBC.SWEAdmin@gov.bc.ca

Northeast Region

3235 Westwood Drive
Prince George, B.C. V2N 1S4
Tel: 250-612-4172
Fax: 250-612-4171
Email: EMBC.NEAAdmin@gov.bc.ca

Central Region

1255–D Dalhousie Drive
Kamloops, B.C. V2C 5Z5
Tel: 250-371-5240
Fax: 250-371-5246
Email: EMBC.CTLAdmin@gov.bc.ca

Northwest Region

Suite 1B–3215 Eby Street
Terrace, B.C. V8G 2X8
Tel: 250-615-4800
Fax: 250-615-4817
Email: EMBC.NWEAdmin@gov.bc.ca

Southeast Region

101–333 Victoria Street
Nelson, B.C. V1L 4K3
Tel: 250-354-5904
Fax: 250-354-6561
Email: EMBC.SEAAdmin@gov.bc.ca









Vancouver Island - Central Coast Region

Block A - Suite 200
2261 Keating Cross Road
Saanichton, B.C. V8M 2A5
Tel: 250-952–5848
Fax: 250-952-4304
Email: EMBC.VIRAdmin@gov.bc.ca

How do BC Emergency Alerts work?

BC Emergency Alerts push emergency alert messages directly to citizens through wireless devices and by interrupting regular TV and radio programs. These messages are only sent when there is an immediate and life-threatening danger. Messages are broadcast using a national system called Alert Ready. This tool supplements current tools used for alerting in your area.

Emergency Alert Channels

BC Emergency Alerts	Other emergency alerting tools
 <p><u>Radio/TV</u>: Interrupts regular TV and radio programs with an emergency alert message</p>  <p><u>Cell Phone</u>: Sends alerts to cellular phones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only works on LTE-connected devices (or 5G) • Dependent on cell tower coverage • Check device compatibility by visiting www.alertready.ca <p>Device owners, broadcasters, and wireless providers cannot opt-out from these alerts.</p>  <p><u>Emergency Info BC</u>: BC Emergency Alerts are posted on http://www.emergencyinfobc.ca and shared on Twitter @EmergencyInfoBC</p>	 <p>Door-to-door notifications</p>  <p>Sirens (tsunami)</p>  <p>Traditional media (regular news reports)</p>  <p>Online communication (social media, websites)</p>  <p>Mass notification systems (e.g. Alertable, Voyent Alert)</p>



In B.C., many communities have their own emergency alerting tools. **A BC Emergency Alert DOES NOT replace those tools.** It provides another way to reach the public in certain situations.

What is the difference between BC Emergency Alerts and mass notification systems?

Many communities in B.C. use local subscription-based emergency alerting applications (e.g. Alertable, Voyent Alert, Connect Rocket).

The main difference between these tools and BC Emergency Alerts is that **people cannot opt-out of receiving BC Emergency Alerts**. In contrast, **people must opt-in to subscription-based alerting applications** by signing up for a service or downloading an app to their device.

People will receive BC Emergency Alerts on their devices regardless of whether they also have a local alerting app. In some cases, the BC Emergency Alerts will also show up on alerting apps. While some people may not appreciate receiving multiple messages, in an emergency it may be helpful. Studies show that people often want to confirm the content of an alert with another source before they take action.




BC Emergency Alerts are just one alerting tool and are not meant to replace existing alerting systems used by communities.

When to issue a BC Emergency Alert through EMCR

There are two different categories of BC Emergency Alerts:

1. **Community Emergency Alerts** are initiated by First Nations and local governments, as the Authorized Alerting Authority, due to a community-level hazard. These alerts are issued by Emergency Management and Climate Readiness staff. The hazards that are currently supported for Community Emergency Alerting are flooding and wildfire.
2. **Provincial Emergency Alerts** are both initiated and issued by the Province of BC. The hazards that are currently supported for Provincial Emergency Alerting are tsunami, extreme heat events and wildfire.

BC Emergency Alerts are not appropriate for all situations. They should only be issued if the BC Emergency Alert Criteria are met:

	There is a threat to human life
	The threat is immediate
	There are recommended actions that may save lives

Emergency Alerts are also issued by the RCMP for Amber Alerts and civil emergencies, and by Environment and Climate Change Canada for tornado and severe thunderstorm extreme weather events.

To issue a BC Emergency Alert, First Nations and local governments should call Emergency Management and Climate Readiness at 1-800-663-3456. EMCR staff will work with First Nations and local governments to issue a BC Emergency Alert on their behalf. Tsunami alerts will continue to be issued by EMCR and do not need to be requested by First Nations or local governments.

Creating an emergency alert message

BC Emergency Alerts provide critical messages required to protect public safety. These messages must be:

- Timely
- Consistent
- Simple
- Clear
- Complete
- Concise

Emergency Management and Climate Readiness staff will issue alert messages on behalf of the First Nations or local governments. No special training on the system is required by First Nation or local government representatives.



Alert requesters will need to:

- Provide their identity to EMCR staff
- Confirm that the alert has been authorized by their First Nation or local government
- Provide a description of the area to be alerted that allows EMCR staff to draw it on a map
- Provide the information and instructions for the public that will be included in the alert message

The complete alert message must be limited to 600 characters or less. This is about 90 to 150 words, depending on how many letters are in each word and how many spaces are used.

Mapping the emergency alert area

Mapping the alert area is an important part of the process to ensure everyone who needs to receive an alert is reached. Here are some tips for sharing information with EMCR about the area you want the alert to reach:

- Provide details on the boundary for the alert (e.g. the boundaries of the area under evacuation order).
- Select a location based on a circle with a center point.
- If you can share your location on Google Maps, it will be easier to map your alert area.

Completing the Emergency Alert Submission form

Tips are provided below for completing the Emergency Alert Submission form that is required when you initiate an emergency alert. There are three options for submitting the form (all options are monitored by EMCR’s 24/7 staff):

- Fill out a [web version of the form](#)
- Complete the [PDF version of the form](#). Email the completed form to: emergencyalertrequest@gov.bc.ca
- If you don’t have computer/internet access, you can share information verbally when you call EMCR to request an alert (1-800-663-3456).



Call ECC at 1-800-663-3456 to initiate alert

Alert Information (*Required)

Confirm the alert criteria are met *

There is a threat to human life

The threat is immediate

There are recommended actions that may save lives

Alert Type *

New

Update

Cancel

Alert Method *

Cell Phone

Radio/TV

Both Cell Phone and Radio/TV

Submitter Information (*Required)

Submission Type *

Single First Nation/Local Authority - record submitter information below

Joint submission from multiple First Nations/Local Authorities - record all submitters on page 2 of this form

First Nation or Local Authority (jurisdiction) *

Full Name *

Job Title *

Contact Number *

Email *

I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization *

Area to be Alerted

If map of area to be alerted is available, email map image to emergencyalertrequest@gov.bc.ca. Alternatively describe area to be alerted below (e.g radius and centerpoint, points of polygon, street names, etc.)

Area to be Alerted

BC EMERGENCY ALERT - Submission Form

Confirm that the three BC Emergency Alert Criteria have been met

Email the completed form to: emergencyalertrequest@gov.bc.ca or fill in this form here:

Select the preferred alert method

<https://submit.digital.gov.bc.ca/app/form/submit?f=6e886414-fe32-41c>

Call ECC at 1-800-663-3456 to initiate alert

Alert Information (*Required)			
Confirm the BI alert criteria are met <input type="checkbox"/> There is a threat to human life <input type="checkbox"/> The threat is immediate <input type="checkbox"/> There are recommended actions that may save lives	Alert Type <input type="radio"/> New <input type="radio"/> Update <input type="radio"/> Cancel	Alert Method <input type="radio"/> Cell Phone <input type="radio"/> Radio/TV <input type="radio"/> Both Cell Phone and Radio/TV	
Submitter Information (*Required)			
Submission Type			
<input type="radio"/> Single First Nation/Local Authority - record submitter information below <input type="radio"/> Joint submission from multiple First Nations/Local Authorities - record all submitters on page 2 of this form			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
Area to be Alerted (*Required)			
If area to be alerted is available, email map image with completed EAS form. Alternatively describe area to be alerted (e.g radius and centerpoint of circle, points of polygon, street names, etc.)			
Alert Message (*Required)			
Construct your alert message by filling text between < > symbols			
Headline	BC EMERGENCY ALERT issued by <name of submitting jurisdiction(s)>		
Area Description	<Evacuate or shelter in place> immediately if you are in the following threat>.		
Event Description	The <event name, type or location> poses a threat to human life.		
Instructions	<Evacuation instructions or shelter in place instructions> If you are unable to evacuate call 9-1-1.		
Will be included if Cell Phone alert: Click for more info: www.EmergencyInfoBC.ca/EventPageName . Will be included if Radio/TV alert: Visit www.EmergencyInfoBC.ca for more information.			
Total Character Count	407		
Max. 600 characters			

Describe the target alert area or email a map or image to EMCR

What is happening? What is the threat? What are the impacts?

Where is it? State the impact area boundaries in a way that can be understood.)

Use proper names when possible (street names, political boundaries, rivers, lakes, highways).

Alert messages for wireless devices can be up to 600 characters.

What should people do? Tell people what protective action to take, when to do it, (immediately or within 2 hours?); how to accomplish the action (go south on highway 5?); how doing this impacts their safety or reduces impacts.



BC EMERGENCY ALERT - Submission Form

Email the completed form to: emergencyalertrequest@gov.bc.ca or fill out a web version of this form here:

<https://submit.digital.gov.bc.ca/app/form/submit?f=6e886414-fe32-41de-9c97-284ec354b652>

Call ECC at 1-800-663-3456 to initiate alert

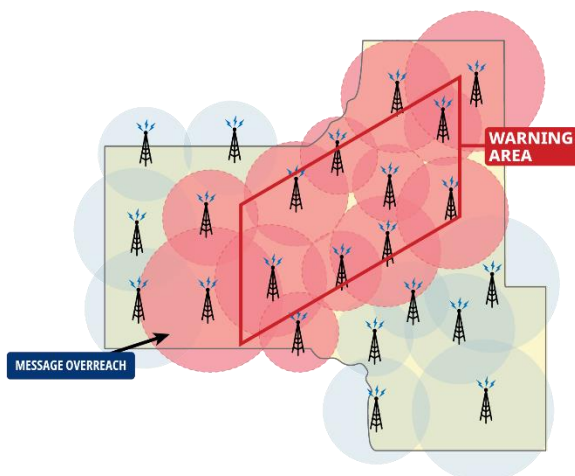
Additional Submitter Information (*Required for multi-jurisdiction submissions only)			
If form is being jointly submitted by multiple First Nations and/or Local Authorities, provide all other submitter details below.			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
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First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			
First Nation or Local Authority			
Full Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Email
<input type="checkbox"/> I am authorized to issue an emergency alert on behalf of my community or organization			

If an alert is being jointly issued with other communities, enter additional submitter information on this second page

Limitations and challenges related to BC Emergency Alerts

BC Emergency Alerts have the potential to save lives, but they also present challenges and limitations.

- **Limited cellular coverage**
Many areas of B.C. lack cellular coverage. This means that it is not possible to receive alerts through wireless devices in these areas.
- **Limited access to LTE-connected wireless devices**
Wireless devices must be connected to an LTE-network or newer 5G network to receive an alert. This means that some devices like older flip-phones will not receive alerts.
- **Reaching vulnerable populations**
Barriers like disabilities, income status and access to technology may prevent people from receiving or acting on BC Emergency Alerts.
- **Alerting fatigue**
When the public receives too many alert messages, they are less likely to trust alert messages or respond appropriately during an emergency. It is important not to over-use public alerting tools.
- **Over alerting**
Alert messages will always reach people outside the desired warning area. This can inconvenience people and could potentially reduce public confidence in the BC Emergency Alert system.



Alerts reach people throughout the radius that surrounds each cell tower touching the alert area.

Post emergency alert activities

Authorized Alerting Authority (First Nation and/or local government) Checklist

- Be ready to provide additional information to your public (social media, web page, public information line).
- Be ready to contact Emergency Support Services (ESS) providers and neighbouring communities as soon as possible when planning the alert or after it is issued.
- The alert will expire after a maximum of 24 hours unless it is cancelled or updated before that. Please stay in touch with Emergency Management and Climate Readiness about your emergency if the alert needs to be updated or cancelled.

Alert Issuer (Emergency Management and Climate Readiness)

- After issuing a BC Emergency Alert, Emergency Management and Climate Readiness will post the alert details to Emergency Info BC (website and social media). EMCR will also re-tweet/share any updates made through the First Nation/Local Government's social media channels.
- If appropriate, EMCR will share information with provincial partners. For example, contacting the Ministry of Transportation with text to be displayed on highway signs.
- EMCR staff will stay in communication with alert requesters while the alert is active to provide support as needed.