



FCC/FEMA Tips for Communicating During an Emergency

Preparing for an emergency

1. **Know what type of landline telephone service you have.** Is your telephone service provided over broadband connections, such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), or is it traditional landline telephone service, which is typically powered over copper telephone lines? Ask your service provider if you are unsure.
 - **Broadband-enabled telephone service** will not work during electric outages without a battery or other backup power source. If you have a battery, test it periodically, understand how long it should last, learn how to replace it, and consider having a spare that you can charge before a storm. If you do not have a battery or other backup power source, ask your provider where you can purchase one.
 - If your electricity goes out, and you don't need to use the phone right away, you can disconnect the battery to prevent it from draining and plug it back in when you need to receive or make calls. Once power is restored, plug the battery back in so it can recharge.
 - **Traditional telephone service** may work during electric power outages, though you may need to use a "corded" phone. Many cordless home phones rely on electric power to operate.
2. **Charge your wireless phone, laptop, or tablet if a storm is coming.** Also consider keeping extra batteries, a solar charger, and/or a car charger on hand.

In the event of a power outage, you may be able to connect to the internet using secure WiFi, if it is available nearby. You may also be able to use your charged laptop or tablet to recharge wireless phones by connecting the devices with a USB cable, though doing so may drain your computer's battery power.

3. **Consider a battery-powered radio or portable television to check news broadcasts** for emergency information during power outages. Make sure you have charged or fresh batteries if needed. You can also purchase a solar-powered or hand-cranked radio, which may also be used to charge cell phones, though you should first check the instruction manual.
4. **Go to [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) and create a [family emergency communication plan](https://www.ready.gov/family-emergency-communication-plan).**
5. **Sign up to receive alerts and warnings** to your phone or mobile device from your local government, school and/or workplace. These local alerts can augment the Wireless Emergency Alerts you receive over your mobile phone and the Emergency Alert System alerts you receive over television and radio.
6. **Store at least one emergency contact** under the name "In Case of Emergency" or "ICE" for all mobile phones and devices. This will help someone identify your emergency contact if needed. Enter household and emergency contact information into all household members' mobile phones or devices.
7. **Inform your emergency contact** of any medical issues or other requirements you may have.



8. **Create a group list** on all mobile phones and devices of the people you would need to communicate with if there was an emergency or disaster.
9. **Write down phone numbers** for emergency services, utilities, service providers, medical providers, veterinarians, insurance companies, and other services.
10. **Ensure household members and your out-of-town contacts** know how to text if they have a mobile phone or device.
11. **Download the [FEMA App](#)** (available in English and Spanish) for disaster resources and to receive weather alerts, safety tips, and reminders so you can have peace of mind and be ready for the unexpected. The FEMA App provides a customizable checklist of emergency supplies and directions to open shelters. You can also set reminders to take important steps to prepare your home and family for disasters, such as changing your smoke detector batteries and practicing fire escape plans. The FEMA App is available for download on the iTunes App Store and Google Play.

During an emergency

1. **Limit non-emergency phone calls.** This will minimize network congestion and free up "space" for emergency communications. If you do need to make a call, try to keep it brief and only convey vital information to emergency personnel and/or family. Limiting calls also conserves cell phone battery power.
2. **For non-emergencies, try text messaging from your wireless phone.** Text messages to other wireless devices may go through when your call may not, though there may be a delivery delay during times of network congestion. (You can also text to 911 in certain locations, so check ahead on [availability](#).)
3. **Adjust your wireless phone to conserve battery power.** Check your wireless device or manual for ways to conserve battery power, such as dimming the brightness of your display screen and disabling certain applications. If you have difficulty accessing your wireless network, consider connecting to WiFi service if your phone is WiFi-capable. If the wireless network in your area is damaged and you do not see any signal bars on your phone, consider turning your phone off to prevent the battery from draining as your phone seeks a usable wireless signal.
4. **Call 911 only for emergencies.** Learn and use the designated number in your state for highway accidents or other non-life-threatening incidents.
5. **Wait 10 seconds before redialing a call.** Redialing a wireless call multiple times in quick succession can increase network congestion, further limiting the ability of all users to place calls. If you must make a call, space out your call attempts.
6. **If you have call forwarding on a landline phone at home, consider forwarding those calls to your wireless number in the event of an evacuation.** This will help you continue to receive incoming calls to your home telephone number.

Important Safety Reminder

If you do not have electric power in your home and are using your car to charge wireless phones or listen to news on the car radio, be careful. Don't try to reach your car if it is not safe to do so, and remain vigilant about carbon monoxide emissions from your car, especially if it is in a closed space.

Additional Online Resources



Find more information at www.ready.gov or www.fema.gov.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at www.fcc.gov/consumers.

Alternate formats

To request this article in an alternate format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

Last Reviewed: 5/14/18

