

Emergency Alerts for the Portland Area - as of May 2025

Ralph Brooks, Forest Park (South) Firewise Neighborhood Leadership, submitted the data below from the May 3, 2025 Skyline Ridge Wildfire Ready Workshop.

[Bracketed comments by Helen Chauncey, Far SouthWest NET]

There are Multiple Levels of Emergency Management, which talk with each other as needed, depending on the scope of the emergency. **[FUNDING is an issue]**

- For Portland it's [PBEM](#) (Portland Bureau of Emergency Management)
- At the Multnomah County level [Office of Emergency Management](#)
- At the State level it's [ODEM](#) (Oregon Department of Emergency Management)
- At the Federal Level it's [FEMA](#) (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

Various type of Communications Used to Announce Emergencies:

- ! Traditional Media (Radio and TV)
 - [The issue we had during the ice storm was which channel to watch or listen to? For Portland, maybe the "affiliates" - ABC (KATU), NBC (KGW), CBS (KOIN), and Fox. For major news - OPB, but not necessarily for local news. Others?]
- ! Government Social Media
- ! Government Web Sites
- ! Liaison / Outreach with Local Groups (like NETS teams)
- ! Wireless Emergency Alerts [two different categories: Both require wireless or cell functionality.
 - 1) push notifications (EAS, Public Alerts) - (they reach out to you)
 - 2) You have to go out and get the info yourself (Watch Duty, Pulse Point)]
- ! Opt-In Alert Systems [PublicAlerts.org](#) (Everbridge based system) –Everyone should sign up for this level of alert communications!
- ! Emergency Alert System ([EAS](#)) – The national public warning system commonly used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as weather and AMBER alerts, to affected communities. Communications sent via the EAS system do get transmitted on the NOAA weather radios.
 - **However, and this is important**, since the EAS is a National, broad-area targeted communications, **it is NOT used to send local evacuation messages directed to smaller areas impacted by messages concerning specific area Wildfire [or other] evacuations.**
- ! Additional communication sites/notification Software Apps include:
 - [Watch Duty](#) – A volunteer-contributed mobile app and web platform that provides real-time wildfire information and alerts to the public.

- [Pulse Point](#) - A 911-connected app that can immediately inform you of emergencies occurring in your community, including early heads-up to local threats such as wildland fires, flooding and utility emergencies.
- ! **Local police resources, in addition to the communication media above,** (Like the County Sheriff) do door-to-door awareness efforts.
 - **However, communication maybe too late** in case of say fast-moving fires or emergencies that occur quickly (like an earthquake),.
 - **Neighbors are expected to take personal responsibility to proactively seek out information and be prepared with their own evacuation plans!** If you hear sirens and hear low flying aircraft, go looking for information on what is going on. Talk with your neighbors and don't wait to leave because you didn't have someone come to your door and say you need to evacuate!

Communication challenges faced in the West Hills:

- Poor/no cellular reception
- Loss of traditional hard wired phone lines
- Cable-based communication stop working when power is lost (or within a few hours when the batteries mounted on the poles run out of power).

Emergency management has a new tool, Protect Genasys (protect.genasys.com). that has mapped all of Oregon into smaller Zones with specific IDs that can then be used to send target communication within those zones in case of emergencies. This is new and likely still a year out before seeking neighborhood feedback on the proposed mapping currently drawn up for Multnomah County. But the new tool will offer significant improvements in targeted communication, with specific messages concerning evacuation timing and recommended/open local evacuation routes.

I hope this additional information is of value.

Ralph Brooks, Forest Park (South) Firewise Neighborhood Leadership