



Los Angeles County

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

FAQ: Weather Radio Alerts

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

What is a Weather Radio?

Weather Radios are a specialized radio receiver designed to monitor broadcasts from the National Weather Service for all types of weather hazards. The broadcasts include warnings, watches, forecasts, and current weather observations 24 hours a day. A weather radio automatically responds when it receives an emergency alert, even if you are not actively listening.

Do I need a Weather Radio?

Weather Radios can be an important part of communications preparedness, especially for residents who live or work in high hazard fire areas. Los Angeles County has worked with the Los Angeles/Oxnard National Weather Service Office to include alerts for hazardous conditions that pose a threat to life and safety such as wildfires. No single method of public alert and warning will work for everyone, and Weather Radios are particularly effective in areas where cellphone coverage is limited and the need for timely alerts is critical.

Can I get more than one radio for my home?

Residents eligible for a weather radio through this program are limited to one per household. Additionally, we have prioritized distribution for residents living in high fire hazard areas where cellphones coverage is limited, and who are otherwise not able to obtain one for their own personal use.

ABOUT THE RADIO

I just got my radio, why does it have a county logo on it?

Weather radios available through the LA County distribution program will be branded with the LA County logo and remain the property of the County. This program was funded using federal grant funds and tracking equipment is a requirement of the grant.



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Can I buy my own radio, will it still work? Are they expensive?

Prices for a model that meets basic criteria of a programmable Weather Radio can vary from \$30 to \$200, depending on the model and other features. When purchasing your own Weather Radio be sure the device has Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) so alerts can be silenced and programmed to receive local broadcast frequencies.

What is SAME?

Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) radios are consistent across brands and models and can be programmed to wake up from standby mode and issue warnings only when an alert for their specific county is issued or when a national or statewide alert is issued. Weather radios with SAME are available from numerous manufacturers.

What happens when we lose power?

The Weather Radios distributed through this program come equipped with batteries that will continue to power the device for up to 72 hours. Should a power outage last longer in your area, simply replace the batteries to continue to receive alerts.

What happens if I move, can I take the Radio with me?

The Weather Radios distributed through this program are intended for use in high fire hazard areas, in some cases that might mean leaving the radio behind for the next resident.

ABOUT RECEPTION

I live in a canyon; will I get reception on this radio?

The quality of reception is dictated by transmitter distance, local terrain, and the quality and location of the receiver. In general, those using a high-quality receiver on flat terrain can expect reliable reception beyond 40 miles, those in mountain valleys may experience little or no reception at considerably less distance. In some cases, external antennas may be required to improve reception in certain areas.



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Will the Alerts mention my neighborhood?

Due to the broad transmission capabilities, alerts will broadcast countywide to Weather Radios and alerts may be received by residents outside the impact area. However, LA County and the National Weather Service are aware of this circumstance and have created templates designed to identify areas as specifically as possible.

I don't have reception, what can I do?

The Weather Radios have an antenna that should be extended and adjusted; you may need to move the radio around your home for optimal reception. If you still don't have reception, attach a wire antenna extender (not provided) to increase range of reception.

What are the broadcast channels for the alerts?

Name	Location	Frequency
Malibu Marine	Point Dume	162.425
Los Angeles	Mt. Lukens/Tujunga	162.550
Avalon	Catalina Island	162.525
El Paso Mtns	Ridgecrest	162.425
Los Angeles	Sandberg	162.425

ABOUT ALERTS

Who is sending Alerts?

Our local National Weather Service Office is responsible for approving and broadcasting alerts using nearby transmitters. However, alerts for non-weather events, such as fires, will originate from LA County public safety agencies such as the Sheriff, the Fire Chief, County Director of Public Health, and the CEO's Office of Emergency Management.

Are there other ways to get these alerts, like on my cellphone?

There are many ways to hear alerts about emergencies, the Weather Radio program is only one option. Residents can sign up for Alert LA County (text, email and phone), and use apps such as Twitter, Pulse Point and Nixle. Other alert systems



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include the Emergency Alert System (Radio and TV) and the Wireless Alert System (cellphones). We encourage residents in high hazard areas to use multiple alert systems, including weather radios when at home.

Can I hear the alert in a language other than English?

Alerts broadcast on Weather Radios are only broadcast in English at this time, but we expect that to change over time as technology evolves.

Where can I find a list of the programmed Alerts?

For a full list of programmed Alerts, go to Ready.lacounty.gov/emergency-notifications/

How often will the alarm sound?

Weather Radios that use SAME technology allow certain alerts to be silenced, the alert will still be accessible on the device, but the audible alert is turned off. Each device comes with an instruction sheet explaining how to disable audible alert when that is an option. There are alerts that cannot be silenced, these are considered to be high-priority alerts and are a standard feature on every qualified device.

When alerts are broadcast the Weather Radio will sound a tone, followed by a text-to-voice alert message. Once heard, simply press the button that is flashing red, and that alert will not be repeated. If you do not press the button, alerts will repeat until they expire. New alerts will trigger the tone so updated messages are identified.

I am hard of hearing, is there another way to get these alerts?

Adaptive devices can be added to basic radios that augment audible alerts with lights and vibrating "pillow shakers". Pillow Shaker/Strobe light kits are available only by request.

