

Q&A/FAQ

Q: Is Wireless AMBER Alerts™ program ending?

A: Yes, but AMBER Alerts™ will now be sent through the [Wireless Emergency Alerts \(WEA\) program](#), which already has millions of users. The Wireless AMBER Alerts program, which helped shape the development of WEA, will be phased out December 31, 2012. Even though WEA has only been available since April 2012, there are already millions of WEA-capable users.

CTIA and the wireless industry joined the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to offer WEA to supplement the existing Emergency Alert System. Consumers with WEA-capable devices and services are automatically enrolled to receive AMBER Alerts for free, along with the Presidential and Imminent Threat Alerts.

Unlike Wireless AMBER Alerts, the WEA AMBER Alerts use the latest technology to send messages to wireless customers with WEA-capable devices in the area where a child has been abducted, even if the wireless customer isn't from the area.

For example, if a Chicago resident was visiting Boston and a WEA AMBER Alert was issued in Boston, the subscriber would receive the alert. At the same time, if an alert was issued in Chicago, the subscriber would not receive it while in Boston.

Q: How do I know if I have a WEA-capable device and if WEA is available in my area?

A: Capable devices, including feature phones, will have this logo on the handset's box:



Additionally, many providers provide a list of capable devices on their networks. While some versions of a device model might be capable, earlier versions might not.

Wireless providers, including prepaid (or pay-as-you-go), are either offering the alerts or are working to make these alerts available for their customers soon. To confirm [Wireless Emergency Alerts](#) are available in your area and your device is capable of receiving the alerts, please check with your carrier.

Q: What makes the WEA AMBER Alerts “better” than the Wireless AMBER Alerts?

A: Unlike Wireless AMBER Alerts, the WEA AMBER Alerts use the latest technology to send messages to wireless customers with WEA-capable devices in the area where a child has been abducted, even if the wireless customer isn't from the area.

For example, if a Chicago resident was visiting Boston and a WEA AMBER Alert was issued in Boston, the subscriber would receive the alert. At the same time, if an alert was issued in Chicago, the subscriber would not receive it while in Boston.

Q: What if my device isn't WEA-capable and/or if WEA isn't available in my area? How can I still receive AMBER Alerts?

A: 700,000 wireless customers were enrolled in Wireless AMBER Alerts. These individuals will receive free text messages about the transition and links to [NCMEC's list of alternative sources to receiving AMBER Alerts](#), besides via [WEA](#).

For more information about the alternative sources to receive AMBER Alerts, please visit: www.missingkids.com/ambersignup.

Q: Will I be charged for the WEA AMBER Alerts?

A: No, the alerts are free of cost for all subscribers.

Q: Do I have to sign up to receive AMBER Alerts?

A: If you have a [WEA-enabled phone](#), you are automatically enrolled for the three alerts: President, Imminent Threat and AMBER Alerts.

Q: Can I opt-out of AMBER Alerts?

A: Consumers may opt out of Imminent Threat and AMBER alerts. Per the WARN Act of 1996, Congress said that no consumer could opt out of Presidential Alerts.

The directions for opting out of Imminent Threat and AMBER alerts vary by device and provider. Please contact your wireless service provider for instructions.

Q: I chose to opt-out of AMBER Alerts, but now want to sign up for them again. How do I sign up?

A: The directions for opting out of Imminent Threat and AMBER alerts vary by device and provider. Per the WARN Act of 1996, Congress said that no consumer could opt out of Presidential Alerts.

The directions for opting in to the Imminent Threat and AMBER alerts vary by device and provider. Please contact your wireless service provider for instructions.

Q: When did Wireless AMBER Alerts start?

A: The [AMBER \(America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response\) Alert Program](#), named after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, is a partnership among law enforcement agencies, the wireless industry, transportation officials, broadcasters and other entities to activate an urgent bulletin to find abducted children.

Before Wireless AMBER Alerts, AMBER Alerts were issued via television, radio and Department of Transportation highway signs when a child was believed to have been abducted and in extreme danger. The wireless industry launched the Wireless AMBER Alerts program in 2005 because its members believed its technology could expand the Alerts' reach to aid in the recovery of abducted children.

Statistics show that the first three hours after an abduction are the most critical in recovery efforts, and being able to quickly engage the public in the search for an abducted child can help law enforcement bring that child home safely.

Q: How many people signed up for Wireless AMBER Alerts?

A: 700,000 wireless customers were enrolled in Wireless AMBER Alerts. These individuals will receive free text messages about the transition and links to [NCMEC's list of alternative sources to receiving AMBER Alerts](#), besides via [WEA](#).

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