

Emergency Smartphone Resources

By Kathy Sowers

This article will describe how features on a smartphone can be used in case of potential emergency. As well it can keep one updated about a declared emergency. Common aids on the phone include telephone contacts with map/driving instructions, Internet web sites, and applications (apps).

Use the smartphone to plan ahead. The telephone contact list in your smartphone keeps valuable numbers. Include the name, address, landline and mobile telephone numbers and email address of close family or friends who might be contacted in emergency situations. If an evacuation might be to a hotel, include the name, address and phone number of the hotel in your phone. One can quickly call to make a reservation before leaving Oakmont. Tap an address/map in the phone contact list to open up a map with directions to the location. This is especially helpful if the evacuation route includes detours in unfamiliar territory. Add the PG&E customer service number 800-743-5000 to the contacts in the phone. Use it to inquire about electrical or gas service, or report an outage.

Several internet web sites provide critical and important emergency notification. Sign up for all 3 of these recommendations: Nixle.com will send you public safety alerts from law enforcement via text or email. Texts are often preferred as they pop up on our screens quickly. PGE.com (Manage my account) will keep your contact information (email address, land and mobile phone numbers on file and send texts, emails and phone calls to advise of potential PSPS (Public Safety Power Shutoff) events. SoCoAlert.com is an alert system from Sonoma County which will alert you to emergencies in your area and provide some direction. SoCoAlert has an app: CodeRed mobile alert. It allows users to select the type of alert situations to receive such as flood, heat, air quality, etc. With air quality an issue during fire season, PurpleAir.com is a web site that provides measurement of air quality through numerous reading stations in the area.

Once evacuated due to an emergency, keep up to date with the KSRO radio app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. The Apple App Store or Google Play Store will come pre-installed on all smartphones. Radio station KSRO is an invaluable app for local news often not included in the other alerts: interviews with first responder leadership; descriptions of evacuation status, abilities to return home after evacuation, and descriptions of where first responders are directing their efforts on a daily basis.

Just as a reminder, you will want to have “cellular” data service for the phone. For most Oakmont homes, a smartphone with only WiFi (no cellular) coverage today is similar to a television without an antenna in the 50’s. It just doesn’t work well! For more information, visit www.oakmont-learning.org.