

Fire Season Nears: Wireless Emergency Alerts By Tina Nerat

We are now in a drought, and with winds even this winter, 2021 fire season should be on everyone's radar. After the past four years of fires and PSPS, most of us with smartphones already have installed apps such as: Nixle, SoCoAlert, PG&E, KSRO radio app, fire/wind maps, PurpleAir, and weather apps. However, there is another important alert that should be activated on smartphones.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are available on most smartphones, but there may be some that don't have WEA. Many smartphones already have WEA activated by default. Recently, there was a test of WEA for Oakmont/Kenwood area.

On iPhones, the WEA alerts are under NOTIFICATIONS. Scroll to the bottom to the category "Government Alerts". There are three types, and they are all enabled by default: Amber Alerts, Emergency Alerts, and Public Safety Alerts. Having all three enabled is not a bad idea (and that is the default).

Android phones are more complicated to explain since they are from different manufacturers (Samsung, Google Pixel, Sony, LG, Motorola, and many more). Depending upon brand/model, WEA is found in different ways and may even be an app. A search on the Android phone SETTINGS or NOTIFICATIONS or CONNECTIONS may help find WEA. The most reliable way to find out is to Google "how to find wireless emergency on <your phone type>" or "how to find Amber Alert on <your phone type>". Various settings may be selected, all dependent upon your Android: Extreme Threats, Severe Threats, Amber Alerts, Civil Alerts, Public Safety Messages, State & Local Tests, and possibly more or less or different category names.

For those with less tech-savvy neighbors, please help them set up alerts or tell them to read this article in the "paper" version, online Oakmont News at www.oakmontvillage.com, or online at www.oakmont-learning.org. If help over the phone with setup is needed, contact OTLC via the web site www.oakmont-learning.org. If your neighbors don't have smartphones, it's time for them to get one for access to information in emergencies.