



AMERICA IS
SAFER WHEN
OUR
SCHOOLS
ARE SAFER

*A Program to Protect
Our Students*



NOAA Public Alert Radios are being distributed to schools in your community to help safeguard the students in your care. With 24/7 capability and battery backup, the radio is always on guard to alert you to severe weather conditions, terrorist threats, and other emergencies in your immediate area, even when other communication lines are unavailable.

This school distribution program is sponsored by:

- *U.S. Department of Commerce/
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)*
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*
- *U.S. Department of Education*
- *U.S. Department of Homeland Security/
Federal Emergency Management Agency/Citizen Corps*

When Seconds Count

The NOAA Public Alert Radio, also known as NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, is a powerful safety tool, with dozens of alerts and a broadcast capability that ensures direct access to information on a wide range of emergencies. Whether it's a telephone outage disrupting 911 services, an approaching tornado, local roads overrun by flash floods, a derailed train posing a hazardous material threat, or an immediate need to be on the lookout for an abducted child, the radio sounds an immediate alarm. And whether the emergency is national or specific to your community, you can count on the NOAA Public Alert Radio to signal the danger and recommend safety steps.

Your Radio Provides Alerts 24/7

Just as an alarm clock, the radio can be programmed to sound alerts to your preferences. You can learn what is happening nationally or receive information specific to certain events or geographic areas. For example, if your area is prone to tornadoes or flash floods, you can program the radio to Tornado Warnings and Flash Flood Warnings in your county or city and neighboring areas. If you live near a nuclear power plant, you can program the radio to receive Nuclear Power Plant Warnings, Shelter-In-Place, and Immediate Evacuation emergency messages. If a train derails, the radio will let you know about any biochemical hazards and provide guidance on what to do.

A light on the radio indicates the urgency of the event. A *warning* light means that an event is occurring and immediate, possibly life-saving action is required. A *watch* light underscores the need to remain vigilant because of the possibility that the event will turn into a warning situation. Connecting the radio to other attention-getting devices, such as strobe lights, sirens, bed-shakers, and peripheral alerting mechanisms, ensures that people with particular challenges can also benefit from the safeguards.

Your School Emergency Response Plan

Once programmed, your radio can be an important part of your school emergency response and crisis management plan. Developing protocols and policies to be implemented in the event of an emergency is one of the most important steps in the crisis planning process. Once these protocols are developed, it is important that they be shared with the entire school community, including faculty, parents, and students, to ensure all are familiar with their role and expectations before a disaster strikes. To help optimize the radio's effectiveness at your school, please consider the following recommendations:

- *Conduct an assessment of potential hazards in your area. You may wish to review the FEMA Web site <http://www.fema.gov/> for past natural disasters that have occurred in your area.*
- *Place the radio in a central location with continuous monitoring. Some schools keep the radio in the front office since this area is usually staffed throughout the school day.*
- *Provide training for school staff on the significance of various alerts and the procedures to be taken if the alarm goes off. Appropriate response to crises and emergencies can mean the difference between life and death. Ensuring that all school staff know what to do in the event of an emergency can reduce injuries and potential property loss.*
- *Contact your local Citizen Corps Council to learn about age-appropriate student education, training, and volunteer opportunities in all-hazards preparedness, mitigation, and response skills. Citizen Corps is the DHS/FEMA community-based program to actively involve everyone in making our communities safer, stronger, and better prepared. To find the Council nearest you, visit www.citizencorps.gov.*
- *Through Citizen Corps, coordinate with local emergency management, law enforcement, fire, public health professionals, and other community leaders to help your school prepare in advance for the important steps staff should take in the event an emergency is announced over the radio.*

How Schools Can Prepare for Disasters

Preparedness for everyone (including schools, businesses, and families) begins with a plan of action. Each school is encouraged to have a crisis plan in partnership with public safety agencies, including law enforcement and fire, health, mental health, and local emergency preparedness agencies. This plan should address traditional crises and emergencies, such as fires, severe weather, school shootings, and accidents, as well as biological, radiological, chemical, and terrorist activities.

Plans should address the fundamentals of safety, including alerts and warnings, adequate staff and student education and training in preparedness and first aid, evacuation and sheltering in place procedures, and communication processes to parents. Ensuring that school staff monitor your NOAA Public Alert Radio is a great way to stay informed of potential threats. In addition, the plan should include determinations for whether and when the school will release students. For example, students should not be allowed to wait outside for a bus home during a lightning storm. During heavy rain, with flash flood watches or warnings, schools should have written guidelines about the release of students. School buses could lose control in as little as six inches of water, which means releasing students can potentially put them at greater risk than keeping them safe in school.

Additionally, school district crisis plans should address the unique circumstances and needs of individual schools. Districts are encouraged to develop a separate plan for each school building, which should address four major areas: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

And finally, schools need to train, practice, and drill according to the plan. Documents on a shelf don't work in a crisis. For more information on school emergency plans, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan>.

How the Radio Works for You

Owned by the U.S. government and operated by a staff trained to address emergencies, the NOAA Public Alert Radio is a service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. NOAA personnel use information from Doppler radar, storm spotters, state and local officials, satellites, and other sources to issue warnings. These watches and warnings are broadcast over NOAA systems and also are retransmitted by many local radio and television stations. With this information, local emergency management and public safety officials can activate local warning systems to alert communities of an impending weather threat.

In June 2004, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce entered into an agreement providing DHS the capability to disseminate terrorism-related information to national and targeted populations over the existing NOAA network. In 2003, the Consumer Electronics Association partnered with NOAA and Environment Canada to establish new industry standards to help ensure the reliability of products carrying public safety warnings. Products meeting these standards now carry the “Public Alert” logo.



Given the value of this system, the Departments of Homeland Security, and Commerce joined with the U.S. Departments of Education, and Health and Human Services to launch this distribution program to provide public alert radios to schools. The Consumer Electronics Association is another key partner in this effort.

Register Your Radio

Please indicate receipt of your radio by doing one of the following:

- If a **public** school, register the radio at:
<http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/register>
- If a **nonpublic** school, place the “property of United States Government” sticker on the radio and complete the license agreement online at:
<http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/register>

This will take only a minute to complete and there are many other useful safety-related links on the Web page.

All schools are asked to:

- Place the radio in a location that is continually monitored; and
- Visit the Web site for additional information including FAQs and other support resources.



• **This school distribution program is sponsored by:**

- *U.S. Department of Commerce/
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)*
- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*
- *U.S. Department of Education*
- *U.S. Department of Homeland Security/
Federal Emergency Management Agency/Citizen Corps*



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The sponsors would like to acknowledge the following organizations for their photo contributions: Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency; and NOAA National Weather Service.