



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

RELEASE 11-27

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**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ADVISES NEW
YORKERS ABOUT UPCOMING TEST OF WIRELESS
EMERGENCY ALERTS FOR MOBILE PHONES**

*Test Another Step Toward Implementing Free Wireless Emergency Alerts, Also Known as
the Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN)*

On Thursday, December 15, 2011, the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM), in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) and the Federal Communications Commission, will conduct a test of the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) system – a new, free emergency notification service that will allow authorized government officials to send geographically targeted emergency alerts to enabled mobile devices on the AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon wireless networks.

On Thursday, between 10 AM and 3 PM, OEM will send six test messages to WEA-enabled mobile devices prepositioned around New York City by OEM and FEMA. Those wireless devices that receive the test message(s) will emit an audible notification, regardless of the user's ring tone or volume settings. A notification will be displayed on the screen of the device with text that reads: "Severe Alert" or "Extreme Alert." Users will see the following test alert when they open the WEA message: "This is a test from NYC Office of Emergency Mgmt. Test Message 1. This is only a test." Some WEA-capable mobile devices may receive more than one message.

In addition to the OEM and FEMA test phones, a number of newer mobile devices sold to the public by participating carriers may be WEA-capable and may receive one or more of the test messages. People who do not have WEA-capable mobile devices will not receive the test message(s). Due to the limited nature of this test, it is likely that most members of the public will not see the test message(s).

WEA, also referred to as the Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN) or the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), was announced by Mayor Bloomberg, FEMA, the FCC, and the four nationwide wireless providers in May 2011. On January 1, 2012, a pilot of the WEA system is scheduled to go live in New York City. When the pilot program begins, mobile users on participating wireless networks will receive three types of alerts from WEA: alerts issued by the President, alerts involving imminent threats to safety of life or property, and AMBER Alerts. Participating carriers may offer devices that allow subscribers to block all but Presidential alerts. There is no charge to the mobile users receiving these alerts.

In 2006, Congress passed the Warning, Alert and Response Network (WARN) Act, requiring the FCC to adopt rules allowing mobile carriers to voluntarily transmit emergency alerts to their subscribers. The FCC rules required participating mobile carriers to begin deploying WEA technology by April 2012. WEA alerts will not be stalled by user congestion, which may happen with standard mobile voice and texting services. Users are not required to register or opt-in for the WEA program. Many new phones on participating carriers will be equipped to receive WEA messages.

In addition to WEA, New Yorkers can receive text, e-mail, and phone alerts about emergencies and special events in their neighborhoods through Notify NYC. Notify NYC launched citywide in May 2009 after a year-long pilot program, fulfilling a commitment made by Mayor Bloomberg in 2005. Residents in all five boroughs can register an e-mail address, text message account, or phone number for up to five zip codes to receive Notify NYC advisories for free.

For more information on WEA, visit the Federal Communications Commission website at www.fcc.gov. For more information about Notify NYC visit www.nyc.gov or call 311.

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