



Hurricanes, Floods and Other Severe Weather

# Alert Templates for Government Agencies

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# Introduction

## Severe weather events continue to increase in both frequency and intensity.

Data from the [2023 OnSolve Global Risk Impact Report](#) found that from 2021 to 2022, extreme weather events were up 42 percent in the U.S. The incidence of flash floods increased 52 percent and the frequency of severe storms rose 138 percent. When inclement weather hits, it's too late to start thinking about how you'll react to it. The more carefully you imagine an inclement weather scenario and plan your response to it, the further you'll be ahead in managing it appropriately.

With automatic, customizable alerts, you'll be prepared in advance. By creating message templates prior to a crisis, you can generate detailed and informative alerts for every step in your emergency plan. In the wake of an emergency, your messages can be sent quickly to the right audience. Recipients receive only the messages applicable to them, which helps eliminate confusion during a stressful time.



# How to Use the Severe Weather Alert Templates

## Follow these basic guidelines:

- 1 Keep the message length to a minimum.**

This ensures recipients can get the most information in the least amount of time. Text messages should not exceed 160 characters. Limitations on texting length means that longer messages are broken into multiple messages, which are not always delivered in the right order. Some templates in this resource will need to be condensed to fit within your provider's texting parameters.
- 2 Remember these templates are only a suggestion.**

You may need to modify them to fit your agency's needs or situation.
- 3 Review your policies and procedures for issuing emergency notifications.**

In most cases, the more notice you can give someone the better the outcome may be.

# Severe Weather Alert Templates

## Before and During the Severe Weather Event

If possible, start sending out emergency notifications before a weather-related event occurs. These pre-storm warnings are critical to the safety and security of your team and community. The following are template messages you can input into your customizable emergency notification system.

### Evacuation Order

#### *Drill Message*

##### **SMS**

[Agency Name] Alert: EVACUATION DRILL for [location] on [date] [time]. Proceed to your designated safety area NOW for more instruction.

##### **Email**

Subject: DRILL. This is an evacuation drill.

##### **Body**

It's time to begin the scheduled evacuation drill for [location]. Proceed to the designated evacuation area in an orderly fashion. Once you have reached the evacuation area, check in with your emergency coordinator [contact] or destination assistant [contact] for further instructions.

#### *Live Message*

##### **SMS**

[Agency Name] Alert: Evacuation Notice! Developing situation in [location] on [date] [time]. Proceed to designated area. Press 1 to confirm receipt.

##### **Email**

Subject: Evacuation Notice!

##### **Body**

Proceed to the designated evacuation area in an orderly fashion. There is no imminent threat: We are monitoring a developing situation in [location] on [date] [time]. Once you have reached the evacuation area, check in with your emergency coordinator [contact] or destination assistant [contact] for further instructions.





## Storm Hotline

### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: Storm warning for [location] on [date] [time]! Call [number] for actions to take. For questions, contact your emergency management office.

### Email

Subject: Alert! Storm warning!

### Body

A storm warning is now in effect for [location] on [date] [time]. If inclement weather occurs, you can obtain status information by calling [number]. Stay safe!

## Hurricanes

### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: A hurricane has been forecasted to impact [CITY, STATE] on [FORECASTED DATES OF STORM]. Stay alert to emergency messages regarding evacuations, closures and relevant instructions.

[Agency Name] Alert: HURRICANE WARNING for [location] on [date] [time]. TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY! Press 1 to confirm receipt.

### Email

Subject: Hurricane approaching!

### Body

A hurricane has been forecasted to impact [location details] on [forecasted dates of storms] in the path of (Hurricane XYZ). Stay alert to emergency messages regarding evacuations, closures and relevant instructions.



## Lightning Strikes

### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: LIGHTNING REPORTED IN [location details] on [date] [time]! Remain indoors or seek shelter immediately!

### Email

Subject: LIGHTNING STRIKE! Seek shelter!

### Body

There is currently a Severe Thunderstorm Warning for [area] on [date] [time]. During this time, lightning strikes are a safety concern. Stay inside during the storm. If you do have to go outside, avoid wearing metal. For information on safety during a potential lightning strike, visit [website].

Lightning strikes may hit transformers or other objects that could cause a major power outage. Prepare for this by having a candle and matches or a flashlight with batteries. Remember not to rely on your phone because you won't be able to charge it. Stay alert to emergency messages regarding evacuations, closures and relevant instructions.

## High Wind

### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: HIGH WIND WARNING for [location details] on [date] [time]! Quickly secure any loose items outdoors and remain indoors to avoid debris!

### Email

Subject: HIGH WIND WARNING! Secure loose outdoor items and return indoors immediately to avoid debris!

### Body

High winds of (XX miles per hour) have been forecast for [location details] on [date] [time]. Ensure any equipment or items you have outside the building are stowed or tied down. Please close any windows that may be open (if applicable). Further updates to follow. Stay safe!

## Flooding

### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: FLOOD WARNING for [location] on [date] [time]! Get to higher ground. Avoid driving in high water zones. Press 1 to confirm.

### Email

Subject: FLASH FLOOD WARNING for [location details] on [date] [time]. Avoid moving through water and seek shelter immediately.

### Body

There is a Flood Watch for your area! Flooding is imminent or occurring.

- If you're ordered to evacuate the area: Do so immediately.
- If you suspect you are in a home that is subject to deep flooding: Turn off the electricity and gas, gather canned foods and flashlights, and evacuate.
- If you are in transit: Avoid streets that are under water or barricaded.

We urge you to stay tuned to news outlets for on-going details. We will post updates via [website/link]. Stay safe!

## Responders

### *Responders Needed for Event*

### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: Calling first responders for [event] at [location] on [date] [time]. Press 1 if willing to serve.

### Email

Subject: Calling First Responders for [event]

### Body

First responders are needed to respond to the [event]. Help needed in [location] on [date] [time]. If you're willing to serve, press 1. If you are unable, press 2. Thank you in advance for your service!

### *Application Rejection*

### Email

Subject: Quota Filled

### Body

Thank you for applying to [Name of fire department]. At this time our quota has been filled and we are no longer accepting applications for (XYZ role). Please keep an eye out for up-to-date information on responder fulfillment.





## Post-Event Recovery

Even though the event may have concluded, the real challenge begins in the recovery process. Your main goal is to resume operations as quickly as possible. Implement message templates such as these into your emergency notification system:

### Lifting of Restrictions

The previous emergency Shelter In Place order for your neighborhood has been lifted. Emergency crews have contained the [EVENT] in the area. Conditions are now safe and you may leave your homes and businesses and resume normal activities. This message is being sent on [DATE] at [TIME]. If you truly have an emergency situation, call 9-1-1 immediately.

### Notification of Cleanup/Repair/Response Crews/Maintenance Crews Mobilization

#### SMS

[Agency Name] Alert: We are mobilizing a cleaning crew for [event] on [date]. We'll see everyone on clean-up day.

#### Email

Subject: Cleanup/Repair/Response/Maintenance Crew Notification

#### Body

We are mobilizing a cleaning crew for [event] on [date]. We expect to reach everyone on clean-up day. If you're in need of assistance after [event], please call [contact] for repairs and other assistance.



**Rapid, reliable emergency alerts keep the public safe.**

[Contact us](#) to learn more about OnSolve® CodeRED® or [request a demo](#).

## Best Practices for Modalities

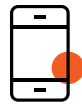
Follow these general guidelines for all alerts:

- ✓ Be clear, concise and timely.
- ✓ Be short and to the point.
- ✓ Be very specific with your instructions, especially if you need recipients to take a specific action.
- ✓ Include important details like times and dates.
- ✓ Include ways to get more information.
- ✓ Help recipients understand how they will receive updates:
  - Will you be sending them?
  - Will you let them know when it's resolved or over?
- ✓ **Send all clears.** This is a must, especially in safety emergencies.



## Email Guidelines

- This is the best mode of communication to provide ALL the helpful information you have.
- Details... details... details... include as many as possible, in a comprehensive, organized fashion, starting with the most important information.
- Remember: You can use phone and SMS alerts to direct recipients to your email for additional details and instructions.



## SMS Guidelines

### Creating Your Alert

- Give instructions for one action at a time so recipients can focus on what is important, especially for shelter or evacuation calls to action. For example, send an alert telling people to seek shelter, and afterward send a follow-up alert with the wellness check. Doing both at the same time can give you a false report as people may mark themselves as “not safe,” because they're in the process of evacuating.
- Incorporate alert variables in your templates to drive ease of use and consistency for alert senders. These are placeholders used within alert copy that can be replaced with recipient specifics at the time of sending.
  - ***Within this piece we have provided sample message copy and use brackets [ ] to depict variable content that OnSolve® can generate for each alert. Portions of message copy that need to be customized based on unique attributes (name of a hurricane, name of agency, etc.) have been marked with parentheses ( ) in the sample message copy. These vary from alert variables as they will not be predefined within your system before the alert send.***
  - Here is a list of example alert variables your agency can include:
    - First name
    - Last name
    - Job title
    - Date
    - Time
    - Additional custom variables
  - With these you can create any drop-down list you want, based on your requirements. For example, an office location variable and crisis response teams.

- Start each voice or email alert by informing recipients of the name of your agency, so people know who is reaching out to them. This helps establish trust over time. It's also important to include placeholders for dates, times and locations in your alerts — especially when they surround a critical event. This will help avoid confusion and give recipients a full detailed picture. For example:

[Agency Name] Alert! [town/city] office will be closed on [date] due to weather. Re-open set for [date]. See email for more info. Updates to follow.

### Be Concise

- Messages sent via SMS should be as short as possible and kept to one segment of 160 characters or less for the most reliable delivery. The goal is to keep the message concise, but understandable — even at the expense of correct grammar.
- In the U.S., a segment of a multi-segment message commonly contains 153 characters, rather than the full 160 characters for a single segment message.
- Particularly for text messages sent outside the U.S., delivery can vary by carrier and carriers may change other requirements without formal notice. Occasional testing is recommended.
- If you choose to send longer messages requiring more than one segment, OnSolve recommends sending test messages to the destination location and local carrier. Send longer test messages to cell phone recipients in the target locations and include phones of every local carrier serving your recipients. This best practice will provide a better understanding of the potential delivery issues with longer messages.
- If you've had issues reaching your recipients in the past or know of potential delivery issues in a specific area or carrier, OnSolve recommends sending SMS messages with a 60-70 character maximum to ensure each message is delivered in a single segment. And remember, you can always tell them to refer to your email for more information. This leads into our next section perfectly, and why it's important to send alerts via multiple modalities.



### Sending Alerts to Multiple Device Types

- It's common for recipients to have different delivery preferences, so you'll need to prepare messages for multiple device types. When an alert needs to be sent to both desktop (email) and mobile devices (SMS), be sure to create an SMS-specific message with a shortened version of the main message. You can proactively avoid delivery issues by composing your SMS message in as few characters as possible, using the character counter within the OnSolve user interface.
- It's important to send alerts via multiple modalities to ensure all impacted individuals receive critical information in the event of an emergency. For the best possible outcome, alerts should be delivered across all modalities, including phone, email, SMS, desktop alerts and voice.
- Excluding the most critical life safety alerts, it shouldn't be necessary to send to every modality simultaneously.

# Conclusion

Now you're armed with alerting templates and best practices for use before, during and after a critical event. Our technology ensures your agency's critical communications are always rapid, relevant and easy to send and receive:



## Rapid Response/Targeted Approach

Get the right information to the right people at the right time. Now you can deliver urgent messages in 190 countries and over 29 languages. Geo-targeted alerts ensure you reach only those in the zone of impact.



## Versatile Solution/User-Friendly Interface

Multiple modalities give you the best chance of reaching everyone. Choose from phone, email, SMS, desktop alerts, IPAWS, voice and more. Our intuitive dashboard makes communication convenient with a simplified, step by-step alert-send process.



## Deep Experience/Superior Support

As a pioneer of the mass notifications industry, OnSolve has expertise honed from over 60 years of public and private sector work. Thanks to our 24/7/365 support team, you're never alone in a crisis.

CodeRED provides **effective communications** to keep your community safe and informed.

[LEARN HOW IT WORKS](#)

## About OnSolve

OnSolve® proactively mitigates physical threats, allowing organizations to remain agile when a crisis strikes. Using trusted expertise and reliable AI-powered risk intelligence, critical communications and incident management technology, the OnSolve Platform allows organizations to detect, anticipate and mitigate physical threats that impact their people and operations. Visit [onsolve.com](https://onsolve.com).

