

INGENIOUS IDEAS

Keeping The Public Informed—And Saving Lives

(NAPSA)—More Americans may be safer since, during the past few months, the consumer electronics industry has been working to transform the broadcast of weather alerts into all-encompassing “public alerts” from several levels of government.

In addition to tornado, hurricane, flash flood and other weather-related warnings, government broadcasts will now notify the public about Amber Alerts, chemical spills, forest fires, boil your water alerts and biological hazard warnings, including messages targeted to specific counties or regions.

Public Alert devices offer the peace of mind that comes from knowing that all alert messages will automatically activate the device and prompt some kind of immediate lifesaving alert. The devices can even provide alerts when a household is asleep. In the case of devices integrated into other electronics, Public Alert-equipped devices provide visual and audible alarms that allow the user to also play video games, watch a DVD or VHS tape, listen to the radio or watch television. Unlike the familiar Emergency Alert Systems used by AM, FM and television broadcasters, which can experience delays in transmission, Public Alert devices provide direct access to government emergency information 24 hours a day, with the ability to automatically prompt users with various types of audio and visual cues.



The government's ability to convey emergency messages has lessened as media choices have grown.

Additionally, Public Alert devices can provide a variety of alert options, including lights, text messages, voice information, sirens or peripheral alert mechanisms. The variety of alarms available is particularly important for individuals with disabilities.

A couple of decades ago, consumers could only watch a few network TV stations and listen to a handful of radio stations, and were tuned in to local warning sirens and tests of the emergency broadcast system. Today, Americans enjoy cable, satellite, DVD, broadcast, video games and the Internet in soundproofed homes and cars.

The threats have changed, as well. Weather used to be the greatest danger; now Americans face industrial accidents, kidnapped children and terrorism. Locally, communities can react quickly to these events with Public Alert messages. Amber Alerts are already credited with bringing many children to safety. The quicker Americans are alerted to these and other dangers, the more lives will be saved.