CIVILIAN SURVIVAL HANDBOOK · UK FIELD GUIDE

If a National Alert Sounds

Official first steps if a UK Emergency Alert arrives, then the household list that official advice cannot hold — including what to do if you are driving, if the phone is not compatible, or if an email pretends to be the service. No predictions, no target lists, no firearms chapter.

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01 · OFFICIAL FIRST STEPS

What a UK Emergency Alert is

Emergency Alerts is a UK government system that provides warning and advice in a life-threatening emergency. The government does not need to know your phone number or location to send you an alert. Alerts are sent only by the emergency services, or by government departments, agencies and public bodies that deal with emergencies. Examples given on the official page include wildfires, severe flooding and extreme storms. (GOV.UK, About Emergency Alerts, read 19 November 2026.)

When an alert arrives, your mobile phone or tablet may make a loud siren-like sound even if it is set on silent, vibrate, and read the alert out. The sound and vibration last about 10 seconds. An alert will include a phone number or a link to GOV.UK for more information. You get alerts based on your current location, not where you live or work. You do not need to turn on location services. (Same page, 19 November 2026.)

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Official wording: when you get an alert, stop what you're doing and follow the instructions in the alert.

If you are driving or riding: do not read or respond to an emergency alert while driving or riding. Find somewhere safe and legal to stop before reading the message. If there is nowhere safe and legal to stop, and nobody else in the vehicle can read the alert, you can listen to news on live radio to find out about the emergency. It is illegal to use a hand-held device while driving or riding. (GOV.UK, About Emergency Alerts, 19 November 2026.)

Check current alerts at gov.uk/alerts. On 19 November 2026 the page said there were no current alerts. Always use the live page, not a memory of this file. This file is not a warning that anything is imminent.

02 · DECISION TREE

The alert has sounded — what now?

The official instruction always comes first: follow the alert. Use this tree only to organise yourself around that instruction. If the alert and this file ever disagree, follow the alert and the live official page.

IF THIS IS TRUE	THEN
Anyone is in immediate danger	Call 999. Do not delay to finish a checklist.
You are driving or riding, and you have not yet read the message	Do not pick up the phone. Find somewhere safe and legal to stop, or let a passenger read it. If you cannot stop and nobody else can read it, listen to live radio. (Official driving rule, 19 November 2026.)
You are at home, at work, or in a shop, and you can read the alert safely	Stop. Read it. Follow it. Then account for the people on your list and tune in as the alert directs.
The alert tells you to stay inside, or official advice is “go in, stay in, tune in”	Go in, stay in, tune in. Official Be Ready wording for an emergency outside the home is go in, stay in, tune in. The wording in the alert itself comes first.
The alert, the emergency services or official advice tells you to leave	Leave as instructed. Take the grab bag if you can do so without delay. Official Be Ready wording for an emergency inside the home is get out and stay out — again, the live instruction comes first.
You received an email, a text that asks for personal details, or a message that is not on the phone’s Emergency Alerts screen	The official service will never send you emails or ever ask you to provide personal details. Treat it as a possible phishing attempt or scam. Check gov.uk/alerts to see current and past official alerts. (GOV.UK, 19 November 2026.)
Your phone is off, wifi-only, on 2G or 3G, incompatible, or you have no phone	You may have missed the alert. Use radio, television, neighbours, and gov.uk/alerts when you can. Official advice is that Emergency Alerts will not replace local news, radio, television or social media, and the emergency services have other ways to warn you.