

CT Alert Best Practices Document

How to use the CT Alert ENS more effectively and efficiently

- **Identify the Community:** It is recommended that the town targeted for receipt of the alert broadcast and/or the public safety agency that is sending the alert should be identified in the message. Many people who have opted-in to CT Alert have listed multiple addresses in different towns to receive alerts about and may be confused if the alert message does not identify the town where the emergency is occurring.
- **Target Population:** It is recommended that the population to receive the alert be targeted appropriately. If an alert applies only to a neighborhood or to only part of a town, then consideration should be given to sending the alert to only the affected population, instead of to an entire town.
- **Timing of the Alert Broadcast:** It is recommended that caution be used when sending alert broadcasts late in the evening or in the early morning hours when most people are asleep (11:00pm – 6:00am). The public has not reacted well to alerts received during that time of the day unless it is in regard to an immediate threat to their safety.
- **Length of Message:** It is recommended that alert messages to the public be kept as short as possible. The message should be no longer than thirty seconds and no more than 300 characters of text. The intended audience will stop listening if messages are long in duration, and the impact on the CT Alert system and the local telephone system infrastructure is severe when long messages are pushed through the network. This is especially a concern when the telephone infrastructure has been compromised due to a weather event. Everbridge offers an “Effective Messaging” training module that is extremely helpful.
- **Type Your Message:** It is recommended that the alert message be typed in the Everbridge “Send Notification” page text window, and make sure that it matches the recorded audio. Messages that are sent without the accompanying text cannot be sent to anyone who has opted-in to CT Alert and has listed an email address or a Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging contact as their communication pathways. Over 100,000 people in the state have opted-in to CT Alert to date. The deaf and hearing impaired community relies on text messaging as their preferred method of communication.

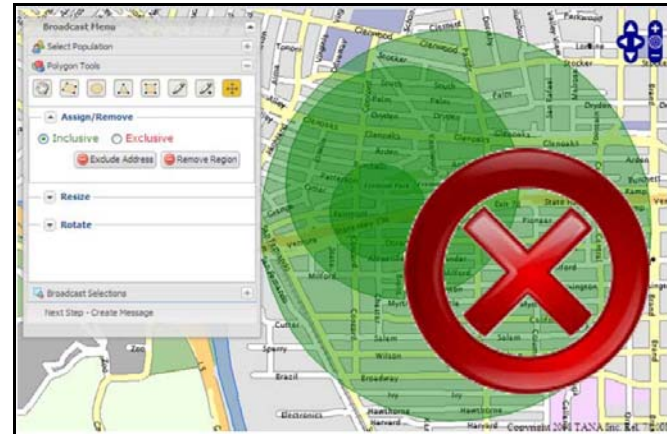
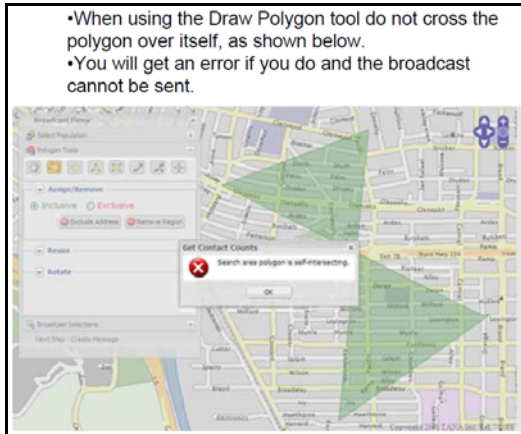
Messages should either be typed directly into the text box provided by Everbridge or typed in notepad and copied and pasted into the textbox. Never type the message in Microsoft Word document and copy it the textbox. Hidden formatting that is inherent in Microsoft Word text will result in a garbled alert sent to emails and to SMS text messages

- Confirmation: It is recommended that CT Alert messages be broadcast without requiring a confirmation of receipt by the recipients. Requiring confirmation has limited usefulness in wide-area broadcasts and extends the amount of time required to complete the broadcast since messages are resent needlessly to people who have already received them, but choose not to confirm receipt. However, requiring confirmation may be important for an alert that is sent to relatively small populations in a mandatory evacuation area.
- Review Contacts: When sending a CT Alert broadcast please be cognizant of the database(s) selected. The CT Alert system provides three choices to select from: 1) 911 Residential which includes all published and non-published residential telephone numbers in the 9-1-1 database; 2) Business, which includes all business telephone numbers listed in the “white pages” directory and 3) “OPTIN” Data, which includes over 100,000 listings of wireless telephone numbers, email addresses, and SMS text addresses that have been registered with CT Alert.

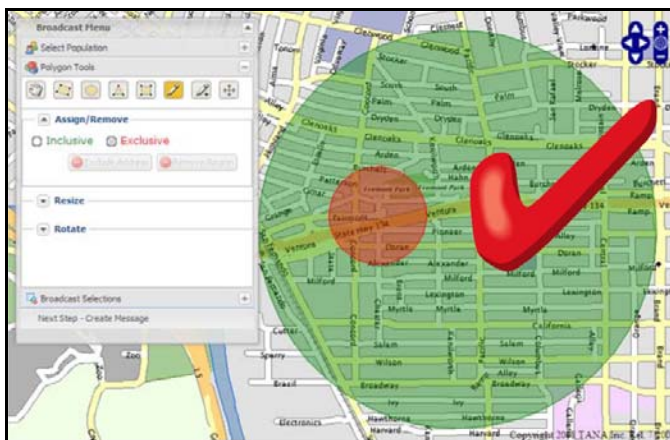
It is recommended that all databases choices be selected when sending a notification to maximize the number of people that will be contacted.

- Duration: It is recommended that the duration of a CT Alert broadcast be limited from one to two hours, which is more than sufficient for most message delivery. One effect of long-duration messages is that non-functioning wired and wireless phones (whether due to loss of power at the home, or loss of network connectivity) will, when they are finally functioning, receive out-of-date messages/directions that will either not be accurate or could actually be unsafe.

- Cycles: It is recommended that CT Alert messages be sent as a single cycle broadcast unless (for example) it is a message that requires a mandatory evacuation. Multi-cycle messages have limited effectiveness, and usually generate complaints from the public.
- Drawing Polygons: When using the Draw Polygon tool, do not cross the polygon over itself, as this will generate an error and the broadcast cannot be sent. Do not stack multiple polygons upon each other. If this is done it may exhaust resources, and though the broadcast may appear to have been sent, it may not get sent. The exception being when a second polygon is drawn to define an exclusion area.



- Exclusions: The Everbridge system allows for specific addresses to be excluded from the alert. This feature can be useful to prevent notifications from being sent to the PSAP itself (the sender) or any other addresses that are deemed necessary to be omitted from receiving the broadcast such as the EOC or other public safety or municipal entities.



- Permitted Uses: CT Alert uses the 9-1-1 database, and state statute requires that it be used for emergencies only. Examples of inappropriate uses that have already occurred are:
 - “Recycling containers need to be placed at the curb before 6:00 AM...”
 - “Numerous vehicles in your area have been entered and valuables removed. Vehicle owners are reminded to lock your vehicles and remove all valuables...”
 - “A large funeral is taking place... expect heavy traffic...”

- All Clear Alert broadcasts: Once a dangerous incident has ended it is recommended that an “All Clear” alert be broadcast as a follow-up to the original alert. This would help to put the public’s mind at ease by notifying them that the danger to them is over. This is especially important for alerts regarding criminal activity or hazardous material incidents.

- Professional Development: Ongoing training is encouraged for all CT Alert users in order to maintain their skill level and to be kept informed of new CT Alert system capabilities. More information regarding ongoing training is available from OSET (oset@ct.gov / 860 685-8080) or from the Everbridge Customer Success Team at www.everbridge.com/webcase .

- Opt-in Registrations: Public Safety Agencies and municipalities should encourage their residents to sign up for alerts at the CT Alert Opt-in Registration website. This will allow them to receive alert broadcasts via their wireless telephones, SMS and Instant Messaging devices, and email. The CT Alert Opt-in Registration website is located at the following link:
<http://www.ctalert.gov/ctalert/cwp/view.asp?a=3875&q=458434>