



City of Malibu News

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City of Malibu to Conduct Full-Scale Test of Disaster Notification System

(Malibu, CA) – The City of Malibu is conducting the second full-scale test of the Disaster Notification System during September as part of National Preparedness Month activities. The City has been divided into four sections, and one section will be tested each week in September. Western Malibu will be tested in the first week, Western Central Malibu will be tested in the second week, Eastern Central Malibu will be tested in the third week, and Eastern Malibu will be tested in the fourth week.

“As a professional firefighter, I know that preparedness is Malibu’s best defense against our number one disaster threat - wildfires,” said Mayor Rick Mullen. “I want every man, woman and child in Malibu to be registered with a cellphone in our Disaster Notification System. No system is 100% effective, which is why we have multiple systems and back-ups. Our notification system is a very powerful tool that is only as effective as the information we put into it. This test and raising the level of cellphone registrations in the City are crucial steps in protecting our families, homes and community.”

In March of 2018, the City conducted the first full-scale test of the system, which sent a message to all contacts in the system simultaneously. Several valuable pieces of information were gained from the first test that are now being applied in this test in an effort to maximize the system’s effectiveness:

- **Reliance on landlines is a vulnerability.** More than half of households in Malibu either have no active landline, don’t have a working phone attached to it, or have a landline that is digital, which can stop working if the power goes out (a common occurrence during wildfires).
- **Tests should be conducted on smaller areas.** For testing purposes, City staff learned that sending a test message to all contacts at once takes up to eight hours causing some residents to be concerned that during an actual disaster they would not receive an emergency message quickly enough. In an actual disaster, the system would be used to target smaller, specific areas that are under imminent threat. For example, if a wildfire started in a neighborhood in Western Malibu and an evacuation was needed, the disaster notification would go to that specific area or neighborhood, but not to the entire City. If the entire City did need to be alerted, the Wireless Emergency Alert system would be used, which is built for purpose.
- **The best way to reach Malibu residents immediately is via cellphone.** 95% of all Americans have a cellphone, with an even higher percentage among adults. (<http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/>). 56% of children age 8 to 12 have a cellphone. (Source: <http://www.growingwireless.com/get-the-facts/quick-facts>)

- **Cellphone registration is crucial.** Phone calls to cellphones, and especially text messages, go out through the system much faster and go out first. Although Malibu has a population of nearly 13,000, only 3,600 have registered their cell phone in the system. It is crucial that everyone register their cell phone in the system, since it is more likely that people will have their cellphones near at hand wherever they are. Moreover, if every family member with a cellphone is registered in the system individually, they can all be contacted – a major advantage in family-wide emergency planning.

The test is also meant to raise awareness among residents about what to expect and what to do during a disaster, and to increase the number of residents who are registered in the system with cell phones.

The Sheriff's Department has the primary responsibility of conducting evacuations. The Disaster Notification System is meant to augment the Sheriff's evacuation efforts, which include knocking on doors, and using bullhorns and sirens to alert residents. The actual evacuations would begin before the City would send out evacuation messages on the Disaster Notification System.

During the two months leading up the first full-scale test of the Disaster Notification System, as the City heavily promoted the test and urged residents to sign up, the number of people registered in the system with a cell phone grew from about 1,500 to more than 3,600.

To sign up for the Disaster Notification System, visit www.MalibuCity.org/DisasterNotifications.

Maps showing the four test sections of Malibu and other information about the test will be posted at <https://www.malibucity.org/emergency>.

For more information, call Public Safety Manager Susan Dueñas at 310-456-2489 ext. 313 or email sduenas@malibucity.org.

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