

# Are Opt-In Systems for Emergency Notification Effective?



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**Critical Issues Briefing**  
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# The Failure to Alert People Has Turned Fatal

## California

- 14 fire-prone counties have less than 25 % sign up
- Sonoma County – 2017 – 40 dead - 20% signed up 500,000
- LA County – 1% of 7.9 million have signed up
- Fresno County – 1% of 1.1 million signed up
- Butte County – Paradise Fire – 86 dead = 68% signed up

# An Uncomfortable Truth

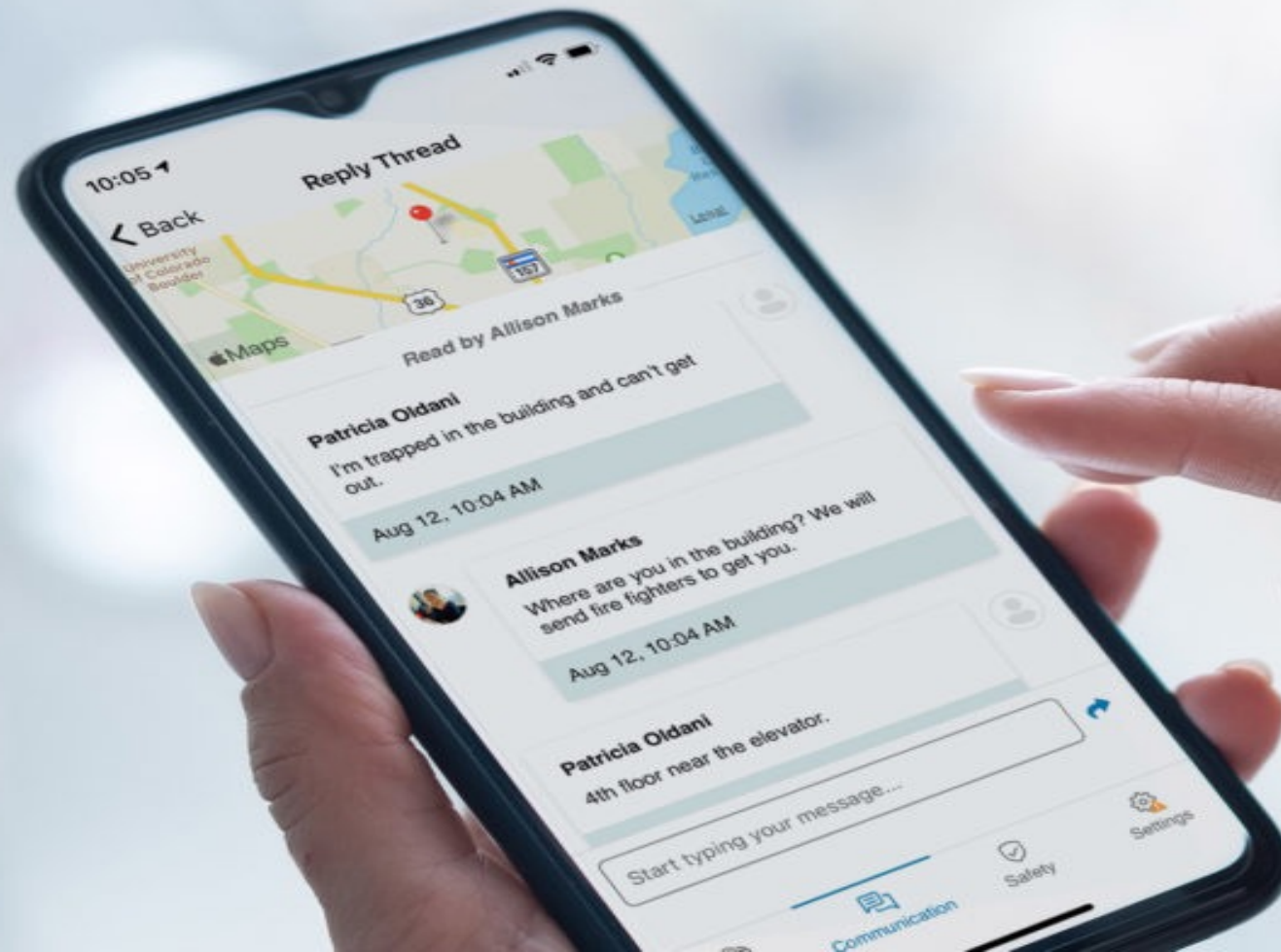
An alert warning and notification system which reaches a very small percentage of residents and visitors is **an ineffective and dangerous gesture** for meeting government's responsibility for emergency notification

A highly effective alert warning and notification system is **an essential tool** for emergency managers and fire service leaders

Opt-in systems can work but not the way it is now

So, **what will you do** in your jurisdiction?

# Built for the Landline Era



# **What obstacles are in place which hinder emergency notifications to our citizens?**

- **No automatic enrollment**
- **Individuals must know how to access the alert warning system**
- **Require (ask) residents to visit city and county websites**
- **Individual action required to 'register' each individual device**
- **Counties often have different systems**
  - Live in one county work in another requires two sign ups**
- **Systems are not coordinated**

# What obstacles are in place which hinder emergency notifications to our citizens?

- Using word of mouth or social media to encourage opt-in  
*“We told them to sign up...”*
- **Not part of performance review of responsible managers**
- Not high priority for responsible managers or their organizations
- **Private emergency notification companies are not responsible for increasing opt-in registration numbers!**
- Least likely to opt-in are the most vulnerable, elderly, non-English speakers, low-income, undocumented & immigrants

# Emergency Alerts Have Not Been a Priority

*“We told them to sign up...”*

*“There’s many reasons that people don’t get the notifications”*

*“We encourage community members to sign up for Code Red”*

*“We’ve been busy with other priorities”*

*“We were afraid a message would cause panic and disrupt evacuations”*

*“You’ve got to sign up and, frankly, very few people do”*

*“I’d have to hunt down 130 different utility companies”*

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