

## What you need to know about the emergency alert test and why you shouldn't worry

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### What is the emergency alert test and when is it taking place?

The government has announced a nationwide testing of emergency alerts on mobile phones, scheduled for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. Describing it as a ‘notification appearing with a loud, siren-like sound and vibration’, the government website’s FAQ section also added that the message ‘must be acknowledged to use other features on the phone’.

### What is all the fuss about?

This has sparked a flurry of concern on social media, with netizens claiming that mobile phones will be ‘locked by the government’ if they fail to respond to the notification. “I’ve been seeing all the discussions on Twitter and WhatsApp groups,” says Hannah Bendrey, a student. “I think its just nonsense to rile people up, I really wish more people would verify what they read online!”

### Is this a rumour or is it reality?

Various fact-checking websites such as Snopes, have contacted the Cabinet Office for clarifications and have posted articles stating that the claims are ‘mostly false’. They

explained that the notification does not need to be 'responded to'. However, similar to a 'low battery' notification, users must acknowledge it by clicking on 'OK' in order to continue using their mobile phones.



### **Does this system exist in other countries too?**

While this is the United Kingdom's first nationwide test of the emergency alarm on phones, this is a method that has been used by many governments across the globe. The United States, New Zealand and Canada send bespoke alerts with notifications similar to the UK, and have trial tests once or twice a year. Meanwhile, some other countries like Japan, Netherlands and France send out alerts through official applications.

### **How will the alert system work?**

In case of a threat to citizens' lives, the government will send a notification to their phones, which will be similar to the trial notification on the 23rd. Citizens can then get in touch with the required emergency services or follow the instructions given.

The government has outlined its hopes for this system to bring a post pandemic Britain up to speed on public safety measures.