

Policy #	0340-31-Public Alerting System Use Policy
Issued	October 2024
Owner	Emergency Management

## PUBLIC ALERTING SYSTEM USE POLICY

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### Purpose

To establish the principles that guide FVRD staff when accessing, maintaining, and operating the regional districts public alerting system and the permitted use, roles and requirements for issuing alerts. Applies to staff responsible for authorizing and administering the FVRD’s public alerting system.

### Definitions

**Advisory Alert:** An *alert* is classified as an *advisory* if it is in response to an *emergency* that is not immediately life-threatening but that is still important to be aware of as it may pose a risk to health or property and could potentially escalate to become a *critical alert* if the situation worsens. Advisory Alerts include general notification types that may not be public safety related.

**Alert:** includes *critical alerts*, *advisory alerts*, and *test alerts*. The term “alert” is used in the national Common Alerting Protocol – Canadian Profile and does not have the same meaning as “evacuation alert.” Alert, in this context, can also be interpreted as a notification.

**Alert Authorizer:** pre-identified personnel who is approved to use the *Public Alerting System* to issue a public *alert* when requested by an *alert requestor*. FVRD maintains 5 Alert Authorizer licences for issuing alerts. These licences are assigned to personnel in Emergency Management (2), Communications (1), IT (1) with one licence reserved for training and on-demand use with custom set up by PEASI’s customer service team.

**Alerting Authority:** an agency or organization with the designated authority to alert and warn the public when there is an impending natural or human-made disaster or threat. In BC, the *alerting authority* is generally the local authority. However, for some disasters or threats, such as those related to extreme weather or infectious diseases, the *alerting authority* may be another agency (e.g. Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fraser Health). FVRD is an alerting authority.

**Alert Requestor:** pre-identified personnel who is approved to request that an Alert Authorizer send a public Alert on their department or agency’s behalf.

**Critical Alert:** An Alert is classified as Critical if it is in response to an Emergency that requires urgent action, is extremely severe (i.e. threatening to peoples’ lives), and that there is high certainty that it will occur. When a Critical Alert is issued, people in the affected area need to be prepared to take immediate action for life safety or protection of property.

**Emergency:** has the same meaning ascribed to it in the Emergency and Disaster Management Act, S.B.C. 2023 c.37.

**Public Alerting System:** a software-as-service web-based software system that can be used to rapidly warn the public of imminent or unfolding hazards to life.

**System Administrator:** the FVRD Emergency Management department is responsible for the Public Alerting System, this policy and is approved to request configuration/changes from the system vendor.

## Policy Statements

FVRD permits use of Alertable for both emergency and non-emergency alerting.

### Permitted Use

#### Emergencies

1. The public alerting system will be used to issue *Critical Alerts* for emergencies where FVRD is the Alerting Authority and that require information to be rapidly communicated to the public. All of the following criteria must be met for a Critical Alert to be issued:
  - a. Urgent: responsive action should be taken immediately or soon.
  - b. Severe: the event poses an extraordinary or significant threat to life or property.
  - c. Certain: the event is likely or has been observed.
  - d. Local: the event is occurring in or will affect parts of the FVRD electoral areas.
2. The public alerting system may be used to issue Advisory Alerts for emergency situations that do not meet the criteria for a Critical Alert, or where FVRD is not the Alerting Authority but is implementing response actions that provide support to the public.
3. 911 outage alerts will be under the direction of the department responsible for our E-COMM and Fire Dispatch responsibilities.
4. The Public Alerting System is not a replacement for existing methods of notifying the public of Emergency situations, such as social media and/or media advisories.

#### Non-Emergencies

1. The Public Alerting System may be used for non-Emergency public communications and for day-to-day or routine operations by request through the Communications request process.
2. It is recognized that many rural areas throughout electoral areas lack communications infrastructure and print media. The public alerting system may be utilized for purposes of geographic notification to bring attention to localized information.
3. The Public Alerting System is not to be used for non-emergency communication within the same time frame and area as current/active emergency alerts.
4. The Public Alerting System is not to be used for internal communications within the Regional District (e.g. between Regional District staff), other than for internal notifications aligned with the system intent, such as EOC activations or building evacuations.

## Alert Requestors and Alert Authorizers

1. Alert Authorizers will be approved for system use by either the Chief Administrative Officer or System Administrator.
2. The System Administrator will ensure that Alert Requestors have received appropriate orientation (by either Emergency Management or Communications).
3. The System Administrator will ensure Alert Authorizers have received appropriate orientation.
4. Alert Authorizers must acknowledge in writing that they have read and understood this policy.
5. The System Administrator will maintain a list of approved Alert Authorizers.

6. Department Heads will not be included as approved Alert Requestors or Administrators unless they have themselves received appropriate orientation.
7. Additional licences for system access are beyond the annual vendor agreement.

## System Access

1. The System Administrator will only provide system login credentials to Alert Authorizers once they have been approved for use and received training.
2. The System Administrator and Alert Authorizers must adhere to the user agreement, terms and conditions of the third-party public alerting system.
3. Alert Authorizers are permitted to access the Public Alerting System only for the purposes of training and issuing Alerts in accordance with this policy.
4. System passwords must follow FVRD's network password complexity guidance.
5. System Administrators and Alert Authorizers will be removed from having system access upon leaving the organization or upon a position change at the FVRD that does not include a role with public alerting.

## Issuing Alerts

1. Alert Requestors will identify and prioritize response actions to address the Emergency and will determine when a situation requires an Alert to be sent.
2. Alert Requestors will only request a public Alert in accordance with training approved criteria.
3. An Alert Authorizer will only issue an Alert when requested by an Alert Requestor.
4. The identity of an Alert Requestor must be validated and documented by the Alert Authorizer prior to issuing an Alert using the Public Alerting System.
5. Alert Requestors and Administrators must document in writing decisions and actions taken in relation to issuing an Alert.

## Issuing Alerts for areas other than FVRD Electoral Areas

1. FVRD may enter into written agreements with neighbouring jurisdictions to allow FVRD to issue Alerts that extend to the neighbouring jurisdiction where:
  - a. FVRD provides emergency management and/or fire protection services to the neighbouring jurisdiction (e.g. has mutual aid and/or service agreements with some member municipalities and First Nations).
  - b. The impact of an Emergency event extends beyond the boundaries of the FVRD electoral areas and urgent notification to people in a neighbouring jurisdiction is in the public interest.
  - c. An Alerting Authority directly requests assistance due to the complexity of their own Emergency and the authority is already established within the boundaries of FVRD (Mission, Hope, Kent/Agassiz, Harrison Village, Abbotsford, Chilliwack).

## Related Policies

FVRD Electronic Communications Policy  
FVRD Media Relations Policy

## Policy Review Triggers

This policy may be triggered for review by:

- » FVRD Policy Review Schedule
- » Emergency Management workplans
- » updates to the Emergency and Disaster Management Act & regulations,
- » updates to policies from the Ministry responsible for the Emergency and Disaster Management Act.

# ALERT AUTHORIZER APPROVAL FORM

The system administrator, Manager of Emergency Management, grants permission to the following *Alert Administrator* on behalf of FVRD to issue alerts as specified:

Alert Authorizer	
Name	
Position & Department	
Contact (email & phone)	

Department	External Alerts	Internal Alerts
<b>Corporate Services</b>		
Communications	Authorizer - All	
IT, GIS, FDM	Authorizer - 911 Service Interruption	Requestor
<b>Engineering &amp; Utilities</b>	Authorizer (water, sewer)	Requestor
<b>Legislative Services &amp; Admin</b>	Requestor – Election, Information, Public Hearings	Requestor
<b>Planning and Development</b>		
Emergency Management	System Administrator - All	
Planning	Requestor – Public Event, Public Hearing, Survey	Requestor
<b>Regional Services</b>		
Protective Services	Requestor - Fire	Requestor
Regional Services	Requestor – Air Quality	Requestor
Parks	Authorizer – Municipal Services (Facility, Parks)	Requestor

I, the undersigned, acknowledge I have attended a training session and reviewed the FVRD Mass Alerting Policy. System access may be revoked by the System Administrator for any use that is not in compliance with the policy. I will take the Alertable training provided by FVRD annually, and immediately report any accidents/mistakes when posting alerts to the System Administrator. The System Administrator can be contacted to assist with correcting any alerts mistakenly published to the public.

System Administrator or CAO Authorization	Approved Alert Authorizer
Name (please sign above): Date:	Name (please sign above): Date: