

“Personal Alert” (Cellular Alert) – Information Sheet for Citizens

What is cellular alert?

What does a cellular alert look like?

What is required in order to receive a cellular alert?

I am not interested in receiving cellular alerts. What should I do?

Why did I not receive a cellular alert?

1. What is cellular alert?

The Personal Alert system set up by the Home Front Command (HFC) is a novel system which enables distribution of emergency messages through the cellular network in Israel as a complementary alert measure to the existing siren infrastructure. The cellular alert is broadcast within seconds in different languages to areas defined by the HFC. The alert is transmitted directly to antennas (GSM + UMTS) in the designated areas and through them to the subscribers.

There is no fee associated with this service. The technology chosen for this service is Cell Broadcast, which is different in its nature from SMS messages. In this technology, all messages are transmitted in one direction, similar to radio station broadcasts. This technology is faster than transmission of SMS messages, less affected by network congestion, broadcast for a pre-defined period, addressed only to subscribers within the alert area and does not invade the privacy of citizens as it is sent to all subscribers in the area, regardless of who they are and where they are (as mentioned before – just like tuning in to a radio station).

This technology was adopted in the United States and Europe as the infrastructure for distribution of emergency messages to cellular phones. However, the main method for alert still remains the network of sirens, and Personal Alert will be used as a complementary measure.

At this stage, the HFC is conducting tests with the Personal Alert system in different areas around Israel. Information regarding these tests is made public through the media and the HFC Web site.

2. What does a cellular alert look like?

The alerts in Israel will be broadcast by the HFC in four different channels which reflect the language of the alert: Hebrew, Arabic, English, and Russian.

There is some variance between the different cellular phones. In some devices, the message will appear on the screen accompanied by a special ring tone, whereas in others there will be an indication with a ring tone similar to that of an SMS.

A typical HFC test message may include (in 4 languages): "Home Front Command: A test of the cellular alert system".

3. What is required in order to receive a cellular alert?

The acceptance of a cellular alert from the Personal Alert system can take place only if:

- a. Your cellular service provider consents to this service.
- b. Your cellular phone supports this capability and is set up accordingly.

In order to verify whether your service provider supports the Cell Broadcast feature, you should contact your cellular service provider.

In order to verify whether your phone supports the Cell Broadcast feature, you should check the phone specification or the user manual or contact the person/organization from which you purchased the phone.

The Cell Broadcast definitions usually appear in the phone under Messaging definitions, and are usually termed "Information Messages", "Broadcast Distribution", "CB", etc.

The Cell Broadcast feature should be enabled on the cellular phone and the channel should be defined as a function of the language in which you are interested:

- a. Hebrew alerts – channel 919
- b. Arabic alerts – channel 920

- c. English alerts – channel 921
- d. Russian alerts – channel 922

Some devices allow for definition of more than one language. In this case, a number of alerts will be received, as a function of the number of languages defined in advance.

It is recommended to check these instructions in the user manual of the device.

4. I am not interested in receiving cellular alerts. What should I do?

The Personal Alert system is a life-saving system, is intended to complement the existing siren network and is offered to citizens free of charge by the HFC. However, one can cancel this feature on the cellphone by hitting a key on the definition menu.

In this situation, no alerts will be received by the device even though they will be transmitted by the HFC. However, it is recommended to set the broadcast channels in advance (as per instructions in Section 3) in order to allow for fast activation if and when necessary.

5. Why did I not receive a cellular alert?

There are several reasons which can prevent a cellular alert from being received by a cellphone:

- a. Partial support of the cellular phones – presently, not all devices support this feature. For example, iPhones, some of the Nokia phones and devices from several other manufacturers. The HFC forecasts that as the awareness for this feature grows in Israel and around the world, more devices will support this feature.
- b. Erroneous definition of the feature – this capability has to be defined and activated in advance (as per instructions in Section 3).
- c. Selectivity of the alert – the cellular alerts are focused on specific geographical areas in specific periods in time. Cellular phones which were not within the geographical area or within the time in which the alert was broadcast, will not receive the alert.
- d. Cellular service provider support – the feature is presently supported by Cellcom, Pelephone and Partner. Presently, subscribers of Golan Telecom and

HOT Mobile will not receive alerts of this type. The HFC is considering the expansion of this service to additional service providers.

- e. Device malfunction – the subscriber should contact the person/organization from which the device was purchased in order to obtain the necessary repair service.