

Weather alert service can be customized

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Changes in CodeRED emergency notifications offered.

Gothenburg residents and others who haven't yet signed up for CodeRED weather alerts, still can.

Others, who have already signed up, can customize the service they already receive.

For the past year and a half, Gothenburg residents and others could receive the alerts, through the CodeRED Weather Warning service, that automatically calls or alerts citizens who are in the path of severe weather.

This occurs moments after a warning has been issued by the National Weather Service.

Residents may want to customize their alerts.

For example, some might not want to be awakened by an automated phone call in the middle of the night warning of threatening thunderstorms but wish to continue receiving alerts about tornadoes.

Or they can sign up for alerts about flooding—all by the click of their mouse.

North Platte clerk dispatch supervisor Mary Ann Agler, who is in charge of the service, said subscribers can visit the link on the Gothenburg or North Platte police department websites and click on the CodeRED logo.

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From there, residents can sign up or customize what kind of weather notifications they already receive.

The site now offers notifications of impending severe thunderstorms, tornadoes or floods.

Subscribers can choose to receive a phone call or text message or both.

Non-savvy computer subscribers can sign up or make changes by calling the Gothenburg or North Platte police departments.

Another change, by the NWS, more specifically pinpoints where severe weather or flooding is expected to occur.

In the past, Agler said the NWS would issue a warning or watch for a county or several-county area.

Now, the NWS uses a polygon on a computer screen to hone in on more specific areas of severe weather, she said.

“Only the people affected in the area are contacted,” she said.

Agler noted that CodeRED, through which custom lists of people are created, can be used for other emergencies.

Last December, local police chief Randy Olson activated CodeRED so Gothenburg residents would be on the lookout for an 11-year-old boy who was missing.

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The boy was later found unharmed.

Olson said the emergency notification system has also been used to alert residents in an area that electricity would be disconnected during repair of a power pole.

This June marks the three-year anniversary of the North Platte Police Department providing dispatch service for Gothenburg.

Both Agler and Olson said they think it's gone well.

"With the change, there are bound to be issues but we try to tackle those head on when they occur," Olson said.

For Agler, the biggest challenge when North Platte took over the service was getting dispatchers to Gothenburg to become familiar with the city.

"Now when we train new dispatchers, we send them to Gothenburg to see where everything is," she said.

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