

GeoCast® Web™

Emergency Notifications



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is GeoCast and why is it important?

In the event of an emergency, GeoCast is an emergency warning tool used to make rapid emergency telephone notifications to residents and businesses in the affected area. GeoCast will be used by City of Dallas emergency officials to deliver incident-specific information or potentially life-saving instruction.

How does GeoCast work?

GeoCast is a web-based application that integrates mapping technology with telephone databases, in order to provide recorded or computerized text-to-speech notifications to people in precisely targeted geographic areas. In essence, to issue GeoCast emergency notifications, trained emergency officials will: (1) draw a “call-out” area on a map, (2) record an emergency message, and then (3) hit the “activate” button.

Does the GeoCast system have my phone number already?

All landline phones residing within Dallas city limits are already included in the GeoCast system. This information is obtained from 9-1-1 and commercial databases. **However, all cellular phones or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phones are NOT automatically included. You must self-register your cellular or VoIP phone numbers.**

What if my home phone number is unlisted?

All listed AND unlisted landline phone numbers (residing with Dallas city limits) should already be included in the GeoCast system.

Do I have to pay for this service?

No. The City of Dallas provides this critical service to enhance public safety. However, receiving a call on your cellular phone may deduct minutes from your cell phone plan. Calls will typically be less than two minutes.

Will I receive nuisance calls?

No. The City of Dallas respects your privacy. GeoCast will only be used for EMERGENCY notifications, and will be issued to specific geographic areas (depending on need).

I have an answering machine... If I'm not home, will GeoCast leave a message?

If an answering machine picks up the call, the emergency message will be left on the machine. If your phone line is “busy”, the system will attempt a redial.

I am hearing impaired and I have a TTY/TDD device...

Will I still be able to receive emergency notifications?

Yes. TTY/TDD devices are automatically detected by the GeoCast system.

I don't have a landline telephone. Can I still receive GeoCast emergency notifications?

Yes, but **you must self-register** using an online Self-Registration Portal or by completing a hard-copy registration form. If at all possible, please try to use the Self-Registration Portal first.

What is the web address to the Self-Registration Portal?

The Self-Registration Portal can be accessed by visiting the Office of Emergency Management's website at www.dallascityhall.com/oem, or you can access it directly at this url: <https://cityofdallas.onthealert.com>

I'm having trouble using the online Self-Registration Portal...

Where can I find hard-copy registration forms?

In addition to registration forms being available for download on the Office of Emergency Management's website, hard-copy registration forms can be found at City libraries, City Parks & Recreation facilities and/or at Dallas Police/Fire stations. Hard-copy registration forms can also be requested for mailing/emailing by contacting the City of Dallas Office of Emergency Management at (214) 670-4275, or via email at oem@dallascityhall.com.

Does GeoCast send out emergency text messages?

GeoCast does NOT send text messages. GeoCast is used for telephone notifications only.

I don't live in Dallas, but my child goes to school there... Can I sign up to receive emergency notifications for incidents happening in that area?

Yes. When self-registering, simply use the address of your child's school to "watch" that location. You may list up to three phone numbers to receive emergency notifications for emergencies happening in that area.

Can I "watch" more than one address?

Yes, but you must sign up using a different email address. The email address is your unique identifier.

You can only attribute one street address to an email address. Of course, for each location (and therefore for each email address), you may list up to three phone numbers.

Note: only locations residing within Dallas city limits are built into our system.

Will registering my cellular phone replace or "overwrite" my landline home phone?

No. Self-registrations are unique from, and in addition to, the automatically included landline telephone database.

I changed my cell phone number. Can I update my information?

Yes, just log into the Self-Registration Portal and update. There is no limit to the number of times you can change your information, and in fact, we urge you to do so as often as necessary in order to keep your information current. However, should your email address change you will need to create a new profile (and delete the current one).

I don't want to receive GeoCast emergency notifications on my cell phone anymore...

Can I cancel my registration?

Yes. Simply log into the Self-Registration Portal and delete your profile by clicking "Delete Your Account".

How will I know if my cell phone is properly registered the system?

Once you complete and submit all required fields at the Self-Registration Portal, you will receive a verification email. You must respond to the verification email to complete the registration process.

What if I don't receive the verification email?

Your email provider may consider the verification email as spam. Check the "Spam" folder in your email account.

What is the purpose of the map on the right hand side of the Self-Registration Portal screen?

This map is to help better identify your exact location. After you enter your address, you can move the push pin around the map. *Hint: use the right mouse button.*

What if my address is not reflected accurately on the map? Can I fix this?

First, be sure you entered your address correctly. If accurate, you may adjust your location by simply moving the pushpin found on the map. This is accomplished by right-clicking on the pin and moving your mouse to reflect your proper position.

What if I forget my password?

Like most websites requiring login credentials, the Self-Registration Portal includes a "Forgot my Password" option.

If I already registered my cellular phone through your Reverse 9-1-1 system, do I have to re-register?

No. All previous self-registrations with our old system (Reverse 9-1-1) are already included in the new system (GeoCast). However, it may be wise to re-register through the new Self-Registration Portal just in case – to make sure that we have your up-to-date information.

What are the limitations of GeoCast?

As with any single warning system, there are limitations. While GeoCast utilizes state-of-the-art technology, phone switches still have a finite capacity. In order to prevent a massive surge of calls exceeding switch capacity it is necessary to limit the number of concurrent calls the phone system is able to make. This in turn means that not everyone will be called at the same time. Especially on larger notifications, it may take some time to reach everyone. In addition, just because a phone call is made...it doesn't mean that someone answers.

Is this the only emergency warning tool that the City of Dallas uses?

Absolutely not! GeoCast is used in conjunction with other methods of distributing emergency warning and alerts, such as:

- Coordination with local media outlets
- The Outdoor Warning System (sirens)
- The Emergency Alert System (emergency broadcasts)
- A social media presence
- The Dallas City News Network (DCNN)
- And more!

No single tool will provide enough warning to all residents in all situations. Each emergency warning method has its limitations. GeoCast is only one component of the overall warning system and should NEVER be replaced as the your only means of emergency notification. It is always important to pay attention to your surroundings by monitoring local radio, television, web or official social media sources, or use tools such as an All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio.

Who do I contact if I have other questions?

For any other questions, please feel free to contact the Office of Emergency Management by email: oem@dallascityhall.com, or by phone: (214) 670-4275.