

## **Heartland 101: Staying Informed in Emergencies**

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Getting the right information to the right people at the right time is critical to ensuring public safety. Emergencies often happen with little warning – whether it’s a wildfire, weather event, or an industrial or transportation incident involving hazardous materials. Effective alerting can save lives, and local mutual aid organization, Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response (NRCAER) plays a role in how local residents and all Canadians receive emergency alerts.

“As an organization, we were pioneers in public alerting. We believe everyone should have access to emergency information regardless of where they live,” says Brenda Gheran, NRCAER’s Executive Director. “In 2003, NRCAER launched a community notification program that provided our industry and municipal members the ability to contact local residents with alerts by telephone. This early success in local public alerting was shared nationally through Industry Canada, and is one of the building blocks that resulted in what’s available across the country today.”

Evolving technology, social media and new legislation led to a number of changes over the past year.

**Local Municipal Alert Systems:** Residents in the region now must register to receive alerts from their municipality. They can select the method most effective for them, including landline, cell phone, email and social media. Visit [www.nrcaer.com/notification](http://www.nrcaer.com/notification) to register for your municipal alerts.

**Regional UPDATEline 1-866-653-9959:** Local industry and municipal members of NRCAER post updates to this line about activity you may see, hear, smell or otherwise notice, as well as incident related information. Add to your contacts or speed dial list.

**The Alberta Emergency Alert:** Implemented in 2011, this province-wide tool replaced the former Emergency Public Warning System. The Alberta Emergency Alert has the ability to interrupt radio and television broadcasts. It uses electronic road signage as well as social media to deliver emergency messages. Check out the Alberta Emergency Alert App at [www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca](http://www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca).

**Canada’s Alert Ready:** Until April 2015, the only province to have an emergency alerting system was Alberta. With the recently launched [www.AlertReady.ca](http://www.AlertReady.ca), alerts are available to all Canadians. They are distributed by cable and satellite companies, radio stations, over-the-air television stations and video-on-demand services.

“While public alerting has taken leaps and bounds, and NRCAER is proud of the role we had in making this a reality, as individuals, we all need to do our part to make it work,” says Gheran. “Stay safe, informed and prepared by learning about public alerting and signing up.”

For more information about Life in the Heartland, visit [lifeintheheartland.com](http://lifeintheheartland.com), follow us on Twitter and Facebook, or email [info@lifeintheheartland.com](mailto:info@lifeintheheartland.com).

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*Heartland 101 is a monthly print and on-air (Mix 107.9 FM) series brought to you by **Life in the Heartland**, a partnership of five local organizations improving access to information, resources, and contacts for communities in and around Alberta’s Industrial Heartland.*