

## Public Safety



### PS-12

#### Electronic emergency messages

Those who live or work in Arlington County, Virginia (189,000), can sign up for a free service offered by the county that provides text-based emergency alerts. After subscribers sign up online, they receive the county's messages on their pagers, cell phones, personal digital assistants, or e-mail addresses. Although the system was developed to alert the public to terrorist events (such as the planes crashing into the Pentagon in Arlington County), it is currently used to provide alerts concerning storm watches and warnings. Any employee of the county's office of emergency management can send the messages from anywhere. The system currently has more than 9,000 subscribers, and the county hopes to sign up at least 25,000 by year's end. Arlington Alert has already sent out more than 275 messages since the system's inception a year ago; it was most recently used to communicate tornado warnings.

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