

Smartphone Tips and Tricks

How your smartphone can save your life in an Emergency

If there is an emergency such as an earthquake, fire or storm how can your phone save your life?

There are a number of different scenarios in an emergency so not all of these may be available to you. If you have either phone or data service available these tips can potentially save your life.

First, be sure that your phone has Emergency Alerts turned on. In your settings look for Emergency Alerts and be sure it is turned on. This will cause your phone to alert you when authorities declare an emergency situation.

Now that you know there is an emergency situation you can learn what is happening even if the power is out so your TV and radio do not work. With the appropriate apps you can watch local or national news. CNN and MSNBC have apps that will provide news 24 hours a day. Local stations have news apps which will allow you to watch their newscasts. You can also watch them from a browser if you don't have the app.

You can also use your browser to search for information from the government or news sites. The National Weather Service has an App called National Weather Service Now to provide up to date weather information for either where you are or elsewhere.

Map apps can help you find an emergency escape route and show you the traffic conditions. If you are lost in the wilds maps can give you the GPS coordinates of where you are to relay to rescue personnel. If you are lost try to leave your phone on as it may make it possible for searchers to find you by triangulating your position.

In an emergency it is likely that the phone circuits will be very busy and you may not be able to make a call. However you may still be able to send text messages.

Because your phone uses a battery it is important that you be able to keep it charged, perhaps for several days until power is restored or you are rescued. You should have a portable battery style charger for your phone and be sure to keep it charged. If you have a car charger for your phone you can also use that to keep your phone charged.

If you have a personal emergency you can call 911 from your phone but be aware that the 911 operator will not know where you are as they would with a landline.

If you have a medical emergency you should have an app such as Medical ID that lists your medical providers, medications you are on and any health issues you may have. This type of app will be available to emergency personnel even if your phone is locked. Additionally in your contacts you should have a contact called ICE (In Case of Emergency) with the contact information for the person you would like notified that you are having an emergency situation.

Be aware that under emergency situations you may not be able to use your phone because the cell towers are out of commission or overloaded. However, if you have working internet where you are you

can connect to a wireless access point and send text messages and some newer phones have the capability to make calls via wireless. Go to settings on an android phone and look for advanced calling. On an iPhone go to settings/phone/Wi-Fi calling.

Depending on your phone and carrier it may be possible to use your phone as a hotspot to attach your computer to allow you to search for information from your computer. This can be done wirelessly or using a USB cable if your computer doesn't support wireless.

New Info

As a result of the disastrous fires in our Area there are a number of additional resources to be aware of.

Sonoma County Alerts – You can sign up with them to receive alerts whenever there is a dangerous situation. They are at <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/FES/Emergency-Management/SoCoAlert/>

Sonoma County Sheriffs alerts are available as text messages by texting your zip code to 888777. Whenever they issue a bulletin you will receive a text message, usually with a link to their website with the complete information.

Sonoma County, the Sonoma County Sheriff's office and the Town of Windsor all have Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Find them on Facebook by searching for them on your news page (search for County of Sonoma not Sonoma County to get the county page, not the tourist page) and choose to follow the page, this will cause their posts to appear in you feed. As well as emergency info it is a good source of info about what is going on with the town.

There is an app for your phone called code red. It is GPS enabled so it will give you alerts based on where you are. You can install it from the store for your phone. After you install it be sure to set up an account and then go to settings to set up what types of alerts you want, the range of alerts (it is five miles by default so you may want to change it) and the alarm sound.

