Communicating Emergency Information to the Public

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- Emergency communications are a last resort. Disaster prevention and minimisation are the best strategies;

- In cases where they are nonetheless necessary, emergency communications should be considered in the largest sense possible: radio stations, television channels, Internet sites, e-mail accounts, mobile telephones, and even more traditional tools such as public sirens;

- Mobile telephones are thus only part of the solution. All the above media are necessary and complementary. It would be a mistake for national authorities to engage only with mobile operators:
  - networks can be damaged or saturated;
  - mobile penetration can be low;
  - literacy rates can be low;
  - message credibility can be doubted.
1/ Mandate or encourage?  
2/ SMS or Cell Broadcast?  

Whatever the answers, basic issues must be a national choice

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Technology</th>
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<td>Italy (2004)</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
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<td>Finland (2006)</td>
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</table>

- **Italy**  
  - voluntary SMS system (September 2004)  
  - 3, TIM, Vodafone, Wind + Council of Ministers  
  - Currently being renegotiated

- **Used several times**  
  - tsunami  
  - papal funeral
• **Netherlands**
  - voluntary cell-broadcast system (May 2005)
  - KPN, Vodafone, Telfort + Ministry of Economic Affairs

• **Operational but not yet used**

• **Finland**
  - mandated system (2006) but one which allows operator to choose technology

• **Neutral approach**
  - recognises that both technologies have strengths
  - recognises that better technologies may emerge
  - recognises that operators are best placed to know which technology will be the most effective
Mobile operators distinguish two types of emergency communications:
- emergency alerting: e.g. “Tsunami risk: please leave beach calmly”
- emergency handling: e.g. “Potable water available at town hall”

Emergency alerting raises special concerns:
- risk of causing panic;
- risk of creating curiosity;
- timing very important.

Emergency alerting and emergency handling share common concerns:
- spam/hoaxes;
- message fatigue;
- network overload;
- cost.

Spam / hoaxes / message fatigue:
- help mobile operators to fight spam e.g. by maintaining ‘Calling party pays’;
- ensure a single, authoritative source for emergency messages.

Network overload:
- ensure mobile operators have sufficient frequency bandwidth;
- allow derogations in voice quality during emergencies.

Cost:
- consider options to alleviate the impact of costs, including:
  - government payment for carrying messages;
  - tax reductions corresponding to the value of the messages sent;
  - funding through an existing universal access fund;
  - ability to charge subscribers for emergency messages.