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Nationwide Emergency Alert Test Scheduled for UK Phones on 7 September

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On Sunday, 7 September 2025, at around 3pm BST, mobile phones across the UK will emit a loud siren and vibrate for roughly ten seconds as the Government carries out its second nationwide Emergency Alert test. This is the second nationwide test since the system was launched in March 2023, intended to ensure the system is ready for life-threatening emergencies such as extreme weather, floods or terror threats. The alert, which will sound even on silent devices, will display a clear message indicating it is only a test, allowing users to dismiss it with a swipe or by pressing 'OK'.

The system has already proven its worth in real-world scenarios. During Storm Éowyn in January 2025, around 4.5 million people in Scotland and Northern Ireland received emergency alerts after red weather warnings. In December 2024, approximately 3.5 million people across Wales and the South West were notified during Storm Darragh, and subsequent alerts were issued amid flash flooding in Cumbria and Leicestershire. The system was deployed in Plymouth in February 2024 when an unexploded Second World War bomb was discovered, helping authorities evacuate more than 10,000 residents in an orderly manner. In a recent interview with the BBC, Tracey Lee, Chief Executive of Plymouth City Council, described the alert as playing a “vital role” in managing the crisis.

The test is part of a wider Resilience Action Plan unveiled alongside government updates to the 2023 Biological Security Strategy, designed to bolster preparedness for emergencies and pandemic risks. While the Labour Government has framed these measures as critical for public safety, critics argue that the timing and execution of such initiatives raise questions about administrative priorities, especially given recent controversies over transport disruptions and public safety responses.

Pat McFadden, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said: “Emergency Alerts have the potential to save lives, allowing us to share essential information rapidly in emergencies, including extreme storms. Just like the fire alarm in your house, we must test the system so that we know it will work if we need it.” However, some campaigners have voiced concerns about the system’s impact on vulnerable groups, particularly domestic abuse survivors, who may face risks if a hidden phone emits the siren. The Government has responded by confirming that users can opt out, with a public awareness campaign planned to address these concerns and provide guidance, especially for at-risk individuals.

Similar systems operate globally in countries such as Japan, the United States and Germany. Finland tests its alert system monthly to maintain public familiarity, while the UK plans less frequent national drills to ensure preparedness with minimal disruption.

As the nation braces for the 7 September test, the focus remains on ensuring the system’s robustness while addressing the needs of all citizens. The initiative reflects a commitment to public safety, though its success will depend on effective communication and sensitivity to those in vulnerable situations.

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