

April 5, 2012

Sally Ellertson
Public Information Officer
141 West Renfro
Burleson, Texas 76028-4261
817-426-9622
F: 817-426-9390
sellertson@burlesontx.com
www.burlesontx.com

Thanks to an upgrade to the system that issues emergency phone notifications for the City, Burleson residents were notified in multiple ways Tuesday of the potential for severe weather and tornadoes.

As of March, the Blackboard Connect emergency phone notification now includes an RSS feed from Blackboard to the City's Facebook page and the City's Twitter page. The message posted on Facebook is the same as the recorded message that is heard in the Blackboard emergency phone notification. The message posted on Twitter is a shorter version. Presently, the City has 4,514 fans of the City Facebook page and 263 followers on the City Twitter page.

That social media notification is in addition to the phone call and email that was already part of the Blackboard Connect notification. Blackboard Connect alerts are pre-recorded telephone messages made to the publicly-listed phone numbers of residents and businesses in the city. Individuals and businesses may also go online and add cell phone numbers so they can receive the pre-recorded voice message via a cell phone. The emergency alerts are sent by e-mail, if requested. This service is free to the public. The Blackboard Connect emergency phone and email notifications reach almost 11,800 contacts. The City has contracted with Blackboard Connect since 2008.

The City also has an outdoor warning siren system that includes 10 sirens within the City's 26 square miles. The siren has both voice and sound (siren and horn). There are two types of weather alerts, the tornado alert and the severe weather alert. The tornado alert includes a voice message followed by a three-minute siren and ends with a repeat of the voice message. The severe weather alert includes a voice message followed by a 30-second discontinuous horn, and ends with a repeat of the voice message. When the outdoor warning system sirens are sounded, citizens should go inside and seek shelter in an interior room. To hear what the alerts sound like, go to www.burlesontx.com/weatheralerts.

Although the City provides multiple notification methods, City officials encourage all citizens to buy a weather radio with S.A.M.E. technology (programming to receive local alerts) and to tune into local news and weather during severe weather.

The City of Burleson's emergency notification policy follows the North Central Texas Council of Government weather policy which defines severe weather as a

storm with the potential of producing hail at least one-inch in diameter and/or winds in excess of 70 miles per hour. When a tornado warning is issued, it means meteorologists have determined that a tornado is occurring, or likely to occur within minutes, in the specified area. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property.

The City's Emergency Operations Center is the information hub when severe weather is imminent. The EOC team - fire department, police department, public works, and public information officer – man the EOC. The EOC team works with the National Weather Service, City personnel trained in Skywarn, and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) storm spotters. The outdoor warning siren system and the Connect-CTY emergency phone notification messages are sent from the EOC. Other City departments are kept on alert to provide needed services if disaster does strike.

To sign up for Blackboard Connect emergency phone notifications, go to www.burlesontx.com/weatheralerts. If you want to receive those same notifications through the City's Facebook or Twitter pages, become a fan of www.facebook.com/BurlesonTX and www.twitter.com/CityofBurleson. To learn how to be prepared in the event of severe weather, go to www.burlesontx.com/emergencymanagement and click on the preparedness guide at the bottom of the page.