#### **APPLICATION FORM**

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2017.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION	
County:	
Program Title:	
Program Category:	
CONTACT INFORMATION	
Name:	
Title:	
Department:	
Complete Mailing Address:	
Telephone:	Website:
Email:	
SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	
Name:	
Title:	
Signature:	

#### **SUMMARY**

In the spring of 2016, Montgomery County launched Citizens Alert in collaboration with the New River Health District as a method to keep residents, staff and emergency personnel safe and informed with quick and reliable emergency notifications and public service announcements.

Citizens Alert is an emergency notification system that alerts residents about a variety of events, ranging from severe weather, fires, floods and other emergencies, to more routine announcements, such as road closures and water utility maintenance. Since the launch, over 5,000 citizens have registered online, opting in to receive notifications from Citizens Alert.

#### **OVERVIEW**

In the spring of 2016, Montgomery County launched Citizens Alert in collaboration with the New River Health District as a method to keep residents, staff and emergency personnel safe and informed with quick and reliable emergency notifications and public service announcements.

Citizens Alert is an emergency notification system that alerts residents about a variety of events, ranging from severe weather, fires, floods and other emergencies, to more routine announcements, such as road closures and water utility maintenance.

Residents, business owners and others register the voice and text communication devices where they wish to receive messages. Messages can be sent in voice and text formats to all standard devices, including land line phone, cell phone and email. In addition to emergency alerts from the County, subscribers may also opt to receive information from the Town of Blacksburg and the Town of Christiansburg.

Residents listed in the County 911 database (approximately 63,000) are automatically subscribed to alerts by phone, but the notification system allows citizens to self-register, provide

additional contact information or opt out. Messages are sent to residents on their preferred contact paths—cell phone, SMS, home phone, email, fax, pager and more—to ensure real-time access to potentially lifesaving information.

#### Montgomery County / New River Valley Health District Launch Citizens Alert

In the spring of 2016, Montgomery County launched Citizens Alert in collaboration with the New River Health District as a method to keep residents, staff and emergency personnel safe and informed with quick and reliable emergency notifications and public service announcements.

Citizens Alert is an emergency notification system that alerts residents who have registered online about a variety of events, ranging from severe weather, fires, floods and other emergencies, to more routine announcements, such as road closures and water utility maintenance.

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"Citizens Alert gives us the opportunity to communicate directly with our citizens during man-made or natural catastrophic events," said Emergency Services Coordinator Neal Turner. "The alerts will help those affected be better prepared to make decisions and respond quickly to the situation."

"In the event of a public health emergency or crisis, this system will allow the Health
Department to rapidly get notifications, information and/or medical instructions out to our
residents and keep them updated as conditions change," said David Linkous, Local Emergency
Health Coordinator for the New River Health District.

"This is a great program that will allow citizens to tailor the emergency notifications that they want to receive to their lifestyle," Montgomery County Sheriff C.H. Partin added.

#### Communication Surrounding Citizens Alert

In an effort to communicate to Montgomery County residents about Citizen Alerts, the Public Information Office created and produced a Citizens Alert PSA to highlight the launch of this new county-town-health district collaboration to inform citizens about weather, crime and other emergencies. Local officials were interviewed to convey the importance of participation in Citizens Alert as well as emphasize the various modes of contact and benefits of individual customization. The PSA was published on websites and linked to on social media, and continues to serve as an important educational tool using compelling images, sound and narratives.

The Public Information Office produced this video as part of its multimedia approach to inform and educate citizens and the news media about the importance of receiving emergency notifications that may affect residents' daily lives. The video had to be simple enough to appeal to county residents who may never have signed up for alerts and town residents who needed to register again to merge their contact information in this new system.

The target audience represented the diversity of the town and rural areas, including the high-tech community and various socioeconomic backgrounds. The primary goals of the PSA were to inform residents of this new service and to encourage them to participate so that they would have a direct connection to local government in times of emergency.

Public Information staff developed the script, using easy to understand language and interviews with respected public safety officials. Whether it was a screen image of the sign up process or a photograph of severe flooding in the County, images used were all very intentional and were intended to show the ease of signing up and the real possibility of an emergency event occurring in the area. All video, photographs, graphics and voiceovers were produced in-house with no outside resources. There was no budget for this PSA other than staff time.

#### The Results: A successful launch and a safer, more informed community

Comments have been very positive from viewers of the PSA on the county's two government cable channels, social media channels and websites. It will be continuously used as an educational tool to acquaint citizens with the emergency notification system. Since Citizens Alert's launch in mid-May of 2016, the video has been viewed over 1,400 times on social media, and over 5,000 citizen web registrations have been made.

#### Supplemental Materials:

- **PSA Video:** <a href="https://youtu.be/gKilO3FU5BI">https://youtu.be/gKilO3FU5BI</a>
- Citizens Alert Webpage: http://www.montgomerycountyva.gov/citizensalert
- Local Emergency Planning Committee: Citizens Alert PowerPoint presentation
- Why is Citizens Alert Important? PowerPoint presentation



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### What is Citizens Alert?



 Emergency notification system using locations and contact methods of interest to individuals.

- Contact methods
  - Phone (home, mobile, office)
  - Email
  - Text messages



# Types of Alerts

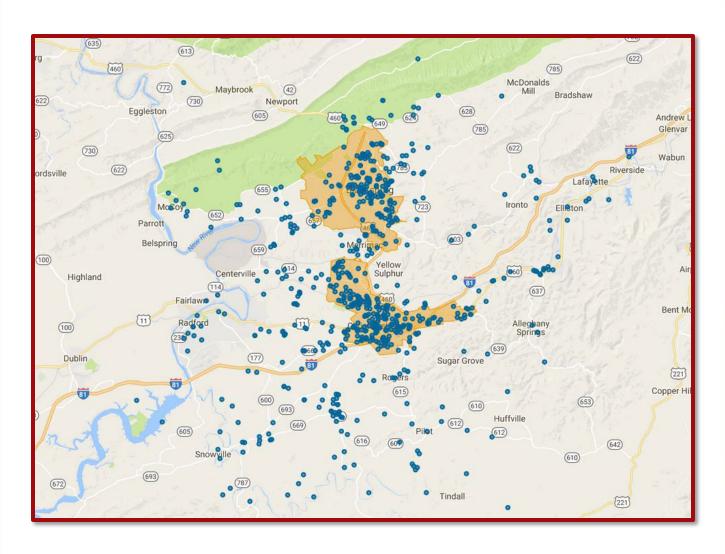


- Evacuations
- Floods (Automated)
- Lockdowns
- Missing persons
- Power outages
- Road closures
- Severe weather (Automated)
- Utility failures



# Subscribers as of May 20

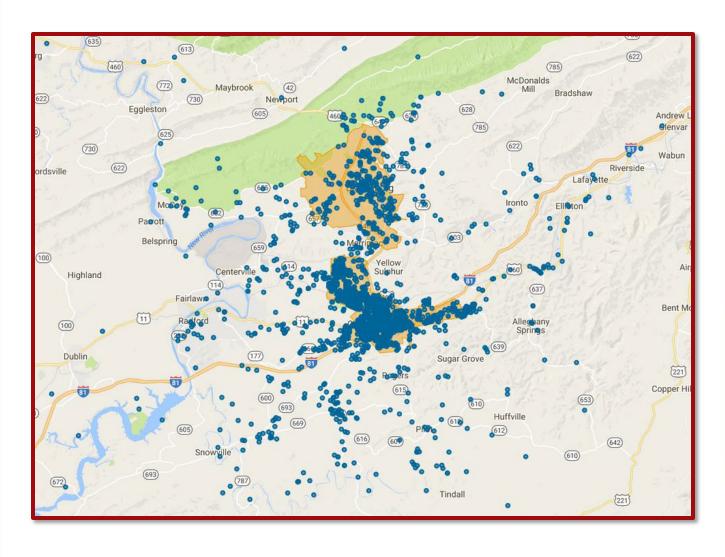






# Subscribers as of August 15

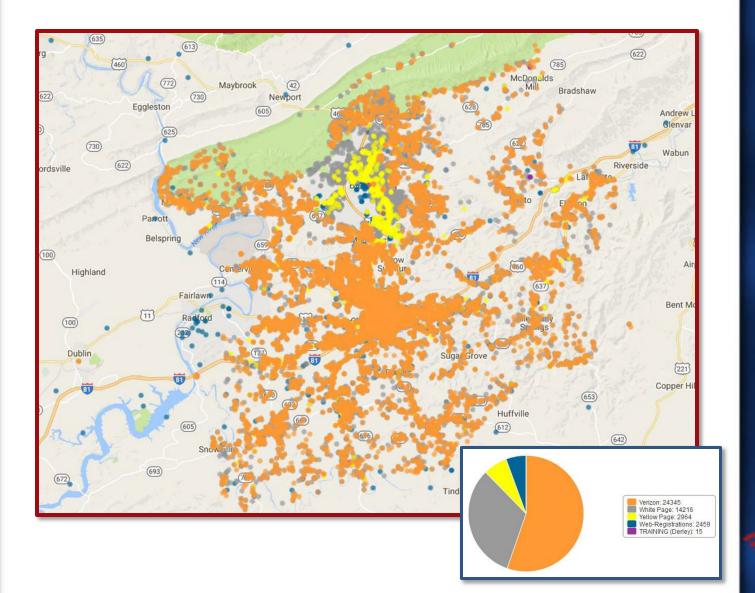






# **All Contacts**







# Severe Weather Example



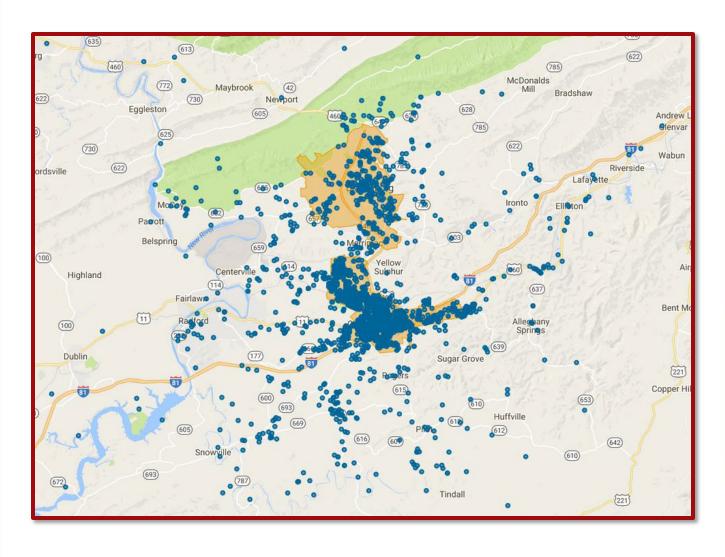
- 1. Severe weather is rapidly approaching.
- 2. Citizens Alert is used to inform residents and businesses.
- 3. System contacts thousands of residents directly by phone, email, text message, etc.
- 4. Recipients receive instructions for safety precautions and evacuation.





# Subscribers as of August 15







### Road Closure

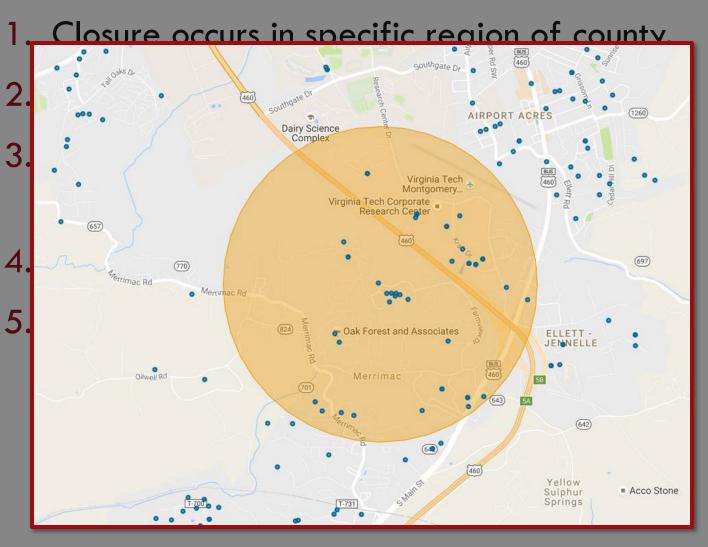


- 1. Closure occurs in specific region of county.
- 2. Notification is written.
- 3. Operator isolates region on Citizens Alert system map.
- 4. Operator selects method of contact.
- Recipients receive notifications and/or instructions.



### Road Closure







### Road Closure



- 1. Closure occurs in specific region of county.
- 2. Notification is written.
- 3. Operator isolates region on Citizens Alert system map.
- 4. Operator selects method of contact.
- Recipients receive notifications and/or instructions.



# montgomery county rirginia CITIZENSALERT



Sign up - www.montva.com





# Why is Citizens Alert Important?





### What is Citizens Alert?



Montgomery County will use Citizens
 Alert to make sure you know about
 public safety issues and community
 events



# How does the system work?



- Citizens Alert sends a message through your primary contact path.
- If you don't confirm receipt of the message, the system will try to reach your second contact path and continues trying to reach you until you confirm receipt.



# Severe Weather Example



- Citizens Alert is used to inform residents and businesses.
- 3. System contacts thousands of residents instantly by phone, fax, email, SMS, push notification and more.
- 4. Recipients receive instructions for safety precautions and evacuation.





### How are alerts sent?



- Home, cell, or business phone
- Email
- Hearing impaired receiving devices
- Push notifications
- SMS
- Text messages



### What alerts can I receive?



- Community Meetings
- Evacuations
- Floods
- Lockdowns
- Missing persons
- Power outages
- Road closures
- Severe weather
- Utility failures



# Why should I sign up?



• The success of this service depends on YOU. Having your latest contact information is the only way to ensure that we can contact you in an emergency.



# How can I sign up?



www.montgomerycountyva.gov/citizensalert

