WARNINGS AND COMMUNICATION

How warnings work in Germany, what the sirens mean, how to set up phone alerts properly – and how to reach each other when the network is overloaded or down.

Last updated: 05/11/2026

A warning only helps if it reaches you – and if you know what it means. Both can be prepared calmly, on an ordinary day, in a few minutes. Then there is the second half of this guide: how do you reach each other as a family when everyone is trying to call at once, or when the phone doesn't work at all? A few agreements and a sheet of paper go a long way there too.

This guide describes the system in Germany. Warning systems differ from country to country – if you live elsewhere, see "If you don't live in Germany" further down.

AT A GLANCE

- **Warnings go out on many channels at once:** phone alerts (Cell Broadcast), warning apps such as NINA, radio and TV, the internet, digital display boards, loudspeaker vans and sirens. If one channel fails, the others remain.
- **Siren:** one minute of rising and falling tone means "danger – find out more". One minute of steady tone means "all clear".
- **When you are warned:** stay calm, switch on the radio or a warning app, follow the instructions, tell others. Only call the emergency number in a real emergency.
- **A radio that runs without a socket** is your most important link to the outside world when power, mobile network or internet fail.
- **Text, don't talk:** short text messages often still get through when calls fail. Everyone in the household checks in with **one contact person outside the region** – and if nobody can be reached, the paper plan applies.

START SMALL

One small task a day, each one ten minutes at most, almost all of them free:

- **Check phone alerts:** look in your settings to see whether emergency alerts are on – including the lowest level, "hazard information". How to do this is explained under "Preparing".
- **Set up a warning app:** install NINA and add places – where you live, where you work, where your parents or children are. Also choose up to six districts in Bereitsein under Warnings.
- **Find your radio station:** switch on a battery or wind-up radio, find the local station and stick a note with the frequency on the radio. No radio? Put one on your shopping list – until then, the car radio is your backup.

- **Ask a contact person:** call someone who lives further away and ask whether they would be your family's "control centre" in an emergency. Add them to your family plan.
- **Numbers on paper:** write the most important phone numbers on a sheet – one for your wallet, one for the grab bag, one for each child.
- **Find your local help point:** check your municipality's website for emergency meeting points or "disaster lighthouses" (Katastrophenschutz-Leuchttürme) and where the nearest one is.
- **Do the warning check:** the Drill section has a "Radio and warning check" – ideally on the nationwide warning day in September, but the radio and app steps work any time.

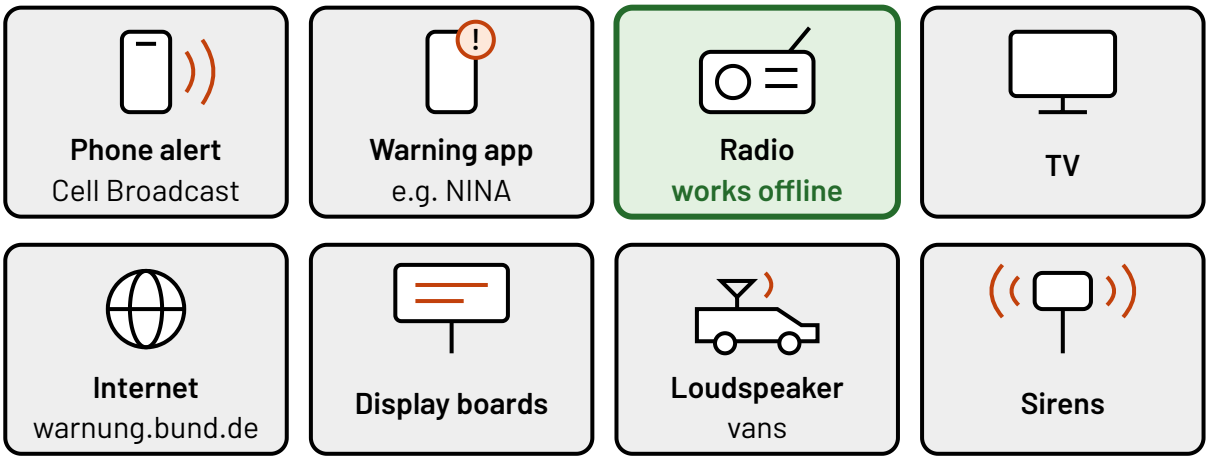
UNDERSTANDING

Why there are so many warning channels

No single channel reaches everyone. There are not sirens everywhere (BBK), older phones may not receive phone alerts (BBK), and during a power cut or a mobile network failure many warning channels stop working (BBK guide).

That is why the authorities in Germany rely on a **mix of warning channels**: several channels complement each other, so the warning bodies reach more people (BBK). Sirens are loud but can only give a few signals. Apps and radio carry much more information – what is happening and what you should do. You get most information through warning apps and radio; in special danger situations, sirens and phones are used as well (BBK guide).

THE WARNING MIX



If one channel fails, the others remain.

✓ Radio: on batteries, crank or in the car

The warning mix: phone alerts via Cell Broadcast, warning apps, radio, TV, internet, digital display boards, loudspeaker vans and sirens. Radio still works when the mobile network and internet fail; on batteries, a crank or in the car it also works without mains power.

The channels one by one

Phone alerts (Cell Broadcast). Since 23 February 2023, the authorities in Germany have been able to send warnings straight to mobile phones (BBK). The message goes to every device connected to a radio cell at that moment – nobody needs your number, and no personal data is collected. You don't need an app, but you do need an up-to-date system: **Android 11 or later** or **iOS 16.1 or later**, with updates installed. The phone has to be switched on and not in flight mode, and the mobile network has to be working. The alert arrives as text of at most 500 characters, with sound, a visual signal and vibration, and links to the federal warning portal (warnung.bund.de) for the full text. Older devices that no longer get updates may not receive it (BBK). Alerts are sent in German and English (BBK, international visitors).

Warning apps. The federal warning app **NINA** delivers civil-protection warnings, police warnings since July 2025, plus weather warnings from the German Weather Service (DWD) and flood information from the federal states (BBK). You subscribe to places – districts, municipalities or an area around a place – and can also be warned for your current location. You won't get warnings for places you haven't subscribed to; the BBK advises adding at least home and work. There are also **KATWARN**, BIWAPP and regional apps (BBK). For weather and floods there are the free apps **WarnWetter** from the German Weather Service and **Meine Pegel**. An overview is under Apps.

Radio and TV. National, state-wide and many local radio stations pass on warnings, on analogue and digital radio (DAB+), as do the main TV channels (BBK). Radio has one special advantage: when the mobile network and internet fail, the stations usually keep working – and a battery, wind-up or car radio doesn't need power from the socket (BBK guide).

Internet. Many news websites are connected to the federal Modular Warning System (MoWaS) and show official warnings as breaking news. All current warnings are on warnung.bund.de (BBK).

Digital display boards. City information boards connected to MoWaS, and some passenger information displays on buses and trains, show warnings (BBK).

Loudspeaker vans. For local incidents, the fire service or police drive through the streets and announce what to do (City of Münster).

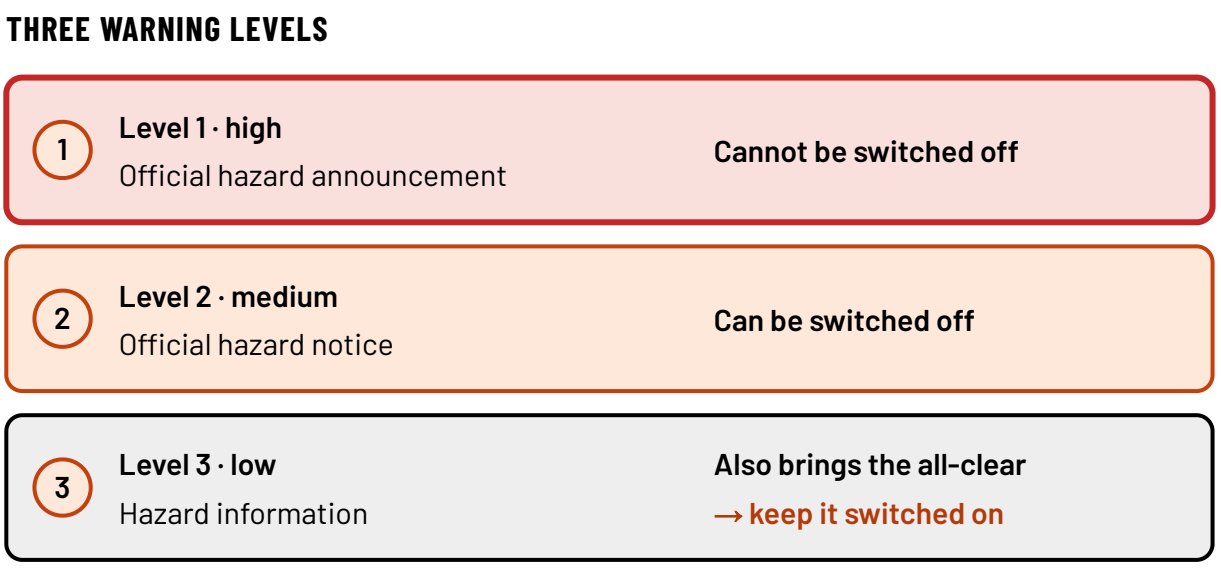
Sirens. They get your attention but don't tell you what is going on. Municipalities buy and run them, and they **do not cover all of Germany** (BBK). Your municipality knows whether there are sirens where you live.

How serious is it? Warning levels

Official civil-protection warnings in Germany have three levels (BBK):

LEVEL	NAME	MEANING
high	Official hazard announcement (Amtliche Gefahrendurchsage)	Danger to life, property or infrastructure is imminent or present. Normal daily life is no longer possible.
medium	Official hazard notice (Amtliche Gefahrenmitteilung)	Danger to public safety or significant damage. Daily life is seriously affected.
low	Hazard information (Gefahreninformation)	There is or will be some disruption, but no specific danger beyond that is likely.

For phone alerts these correspond to warning levels 1 to 3. **Level 1 cannot be switched off**; levels 2 and 3 can, depending on the device (BBK). Don't switch off the lowest level anyway: since November 2025 it also brings the **all-clear** (more under "Afterwards").



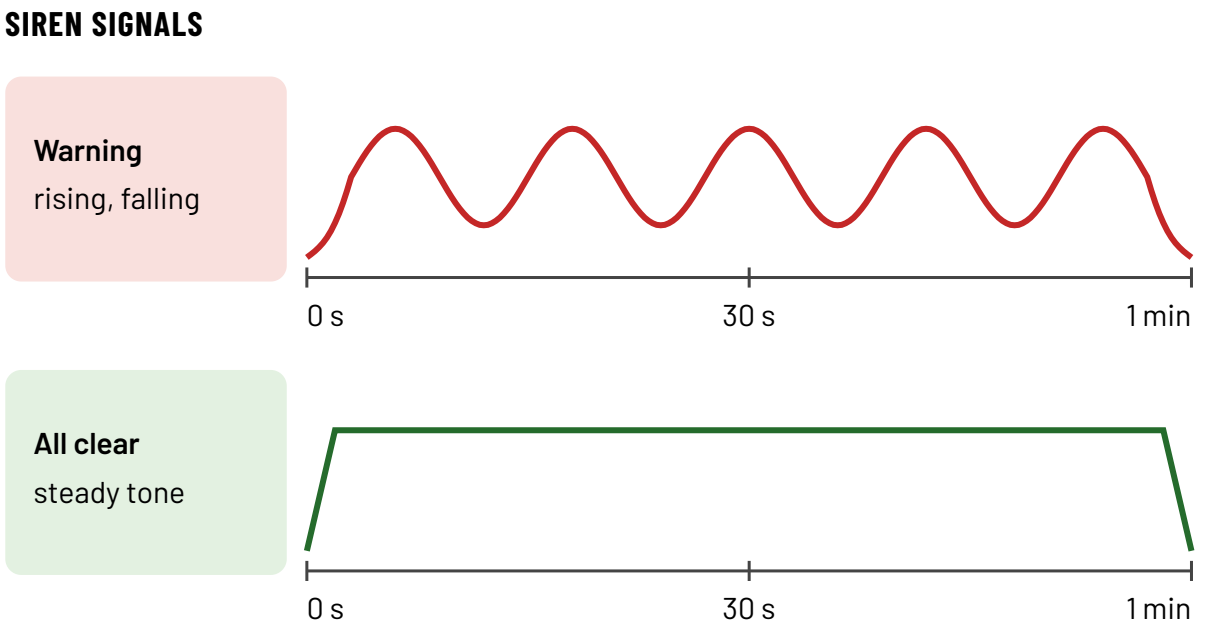
Three warning levels: level 1, high, official hazard announcement, cannot be switched off. Level 2, medium, official hazard notice. Level 3, low, hazard information – it also brings the all-clear, so keep it on.

Weather warnings from the German Weather Service have their own levels and colours: level 1 yellow (weather warning), level 2 orange (significant weather), level 3 red (severe weather warning) and level 4 violet (extreme severe weather). From red upwards the DWD advises avoiding being outdoors; with violet, life-threatening situations can arise, and the instructions of the authorities apply. A hatched "advance information on severe weather" means it could become very dangerous, but place and timing are still uncertain – a good moment to prepare calmly (DWD). More in the guide Severe weather.

Siren signals

Since 2019, two signals have applied uniformly across Germany (BBK):

SIGNAL	MEANING	WHAT TO DO
1 minute of **rising and falling** tone	**Warning** – there is a danger	Find out more: radio, warning app or the authorities' website
1 minute of **steady tone**	**All clear** – the danger is over	Keep paying attention to announcements



Waveform schematic · 1 minute each

Siren signals as a timeline over one minute: the warning is a tone that rises and falls. The all-clear is a steady, continuous tone. The waveform is schematic.

Municipalities can use **their own additional signals** for other events, and sirens are also used to alert the fire brigade. Your town or municipal council can tell you what a local signal means (BBK). What to do step by step when the siren sounds is under "In an emergency".

The nationwide warning day

Once a year, **on the second Thursday in September**, the federal government, the states and the municipalities test their warning systems together (Federal Government, BBK). In 2026 that was on 10 September: at about 11 am the BBK sent out a test warning via radio, TV, display boards, warning apps and Cell Broadcast; many municipalities also ran sirens and loudspeaker vans. The all-clear followed at about 11:45 am. The next warning day is on **9 September 2027 at 11 am** (Federal Government). Municipalities take part voluntarily – ask yours what it tests (BBK). In North Rhine-Westphalia, sirens are also tested on the second Thursday in March (City of Münster).

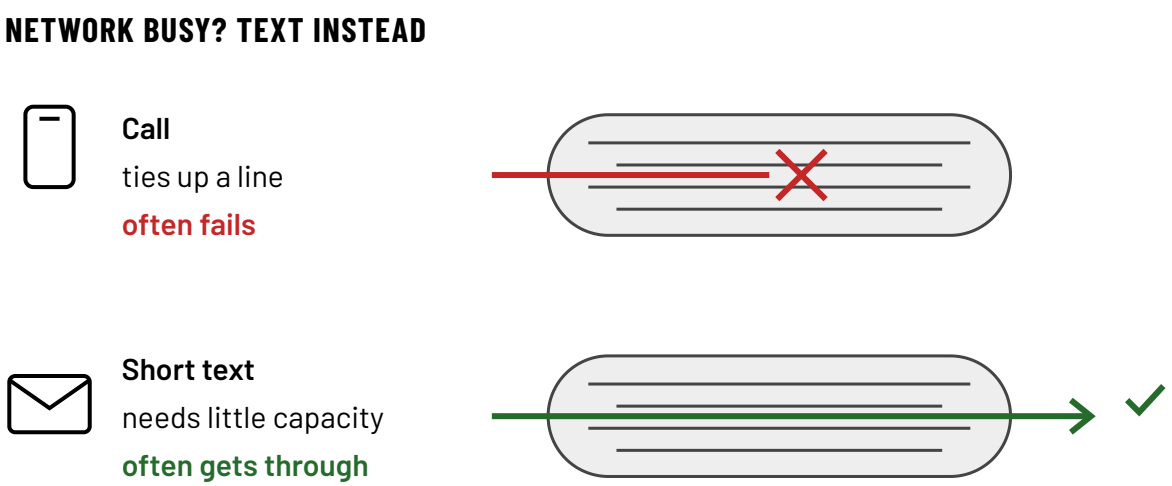
The warning day is your test: did the phone alert arrive? Did you hear the siren? Did the app work? That is exactly what the "Radio and warning check" in the Drill section asks. And if your phone stayed silent:

older devices may not support Cell Broadcast – then the app, the radio and the siren matter all the more (Federal Government).

Why the network gets tight in a crisis

During exceptional events, mobile networks are quickly **overloaded** (BBK power cut). If the power fails as well, it gets even tighter: mobile masts have backup power only in part and only for a short time, and the landline now runs over the internet – router, fibre connection and phone all need power. After a short while, neither landline nor mobile network is available (BBK power cut).

So: **text, don't talk.** A text message needs less network capacity than a call, often still gets through when calls fail, and doesn't tie up lines the emergency services need (Government of Canada, FEMA). Keeping calls to the essentials helps make sure the police and fire service can still be reached in an emergency (BBK power cut).



Overloaded network: a call ties up a line and often doesn't get through. A short text needs little capacity and often still arrives. This keeps lines free for emergency calls.

That is also why a **contact person outside the region** is so valuable: someone who lives further away is often easier to reach in an emergency (FEMA).

If you don't live in Germany

Warning systems differ from country to country, but many work in a similar way:

- **In the EU,** member states have had to ensure since 21 June 2022 that public warnings about major emergencies reach mobile phone users in the affected area – including people who are only there temporarily. Countries can use mobile networks for this, or an equivalent alternative such as an app (EU Directive 2018/1972, Article 110). Ask your national civil-protection authority which channels it uses.

- **In the UK,** the government sends **Emergency Alerts** to phones in an area at risk to life – for example severe flooding, fires or extreme storms. They work on 4G and 5G networks, on iPhones with iOS 14.5 or later and on Android 11 or later. Your phone may make a loud siren-like sound for about ten seconds, even on silent. When you get one, stop what you are doing and follow the instructions – but if you are driving, don't read it until you can stop somewhere safe (GOV.UK). Alerts are sent in English, in Wales also in Welsh (GOV.UK).

The principles in this guide – several channels, a radio, short texts, a contact person, a paper plan – apply everywhere.

Sources for this section: BBK guide (11/2025), BBK "So werden Sie gewarnt", "Sirenen", "Cell Broadcast", "Cell Broadcast: Technische Informationen", "Wann und wovor warnen deutsche Behörden?", "Warn-App NINA", "Bundesweiter Warntag", "Emergency information sources for international visitors", BBK "Stromausfall – Vorsorge und Selbsthilfe", Federal Government "Bundesweiter Warntag" (9/2026), DWD "Warnstufen und Farbskala", City of Münster, Government of Canada (9/2025), FEMA Family Communication Plan, Directive (EU) 2018/1972, GOV.UK "Emergency Alerts".

PREPARING

Setting up phone alerts

On current devices Cell Broadcast is usually switched on already. It's still worth checking, because the menus have different names depending on manufacturer, version and language. A leaflet from the district of Gütersloh describes the paths on German-language phones like this:

iPhone

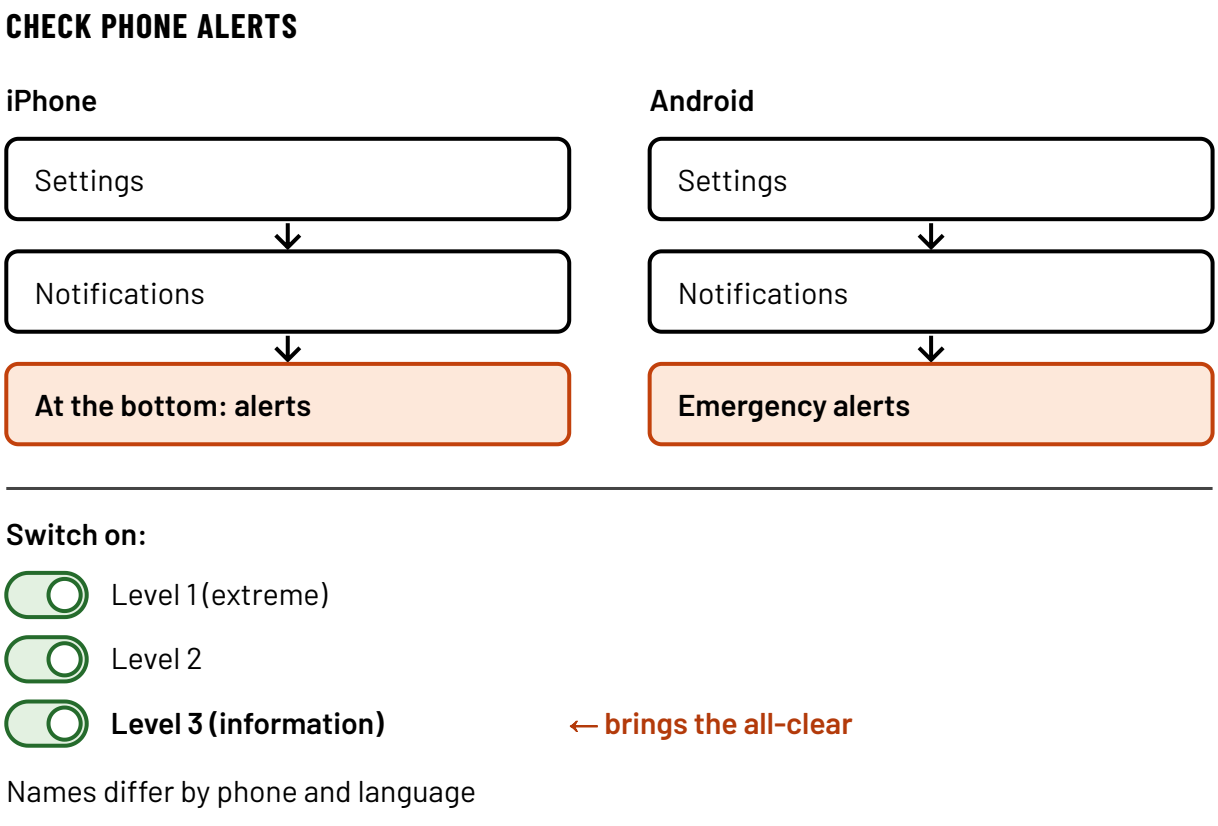
1. Open **Settings** (Einstellungen) and choose **Notifications** (Mitteilungen).
2. Scroll right to the bottom. That is where the alerts are (for example "Cell Broadcast Alerts").
3. Switch on **"Extreme Gefahr"** (extreme danger) and **"Gefahreninformationen"** (hazard information).

Android

1. Open **Settings** and choose **Notifications**.
2. Open **"Notfallbenachrichtigungen für Mobilgeräte"** (wireless emergency alerts). Depending on the device, you can also find it through the messages app or by searching the settings for "emergency".
3. Switch on **"Extreme Gefahr"**, **"Erhebliche Gefahr"** (significant danger) and **"Gefahreninformation"** (hazard information).

According to the leaflet you don't need to switch on "test alerts"; they are for the network operators' internal tests. The lowest level is what matters most: the BBK explicitly recommends keeping warning

level 3 switched on so that the all-clear reaches you too. And **install system updates** – without current software, the all-clear doesn't arrive quietly but with the loud alert tone (BBK).



Setting up phone alerts, schematic: on the iPhone, Settings, Notifications, alerts at the very bottom. On Android, Settings, Notifications, emergency alerts. Switch on: level 1 extreme, level 2, level 3 information. Names differ by device and language.

Dismissed an alert by mistake? On Android devices, received alerts are kept in an archive (where, depends on the device). iPhones have no such archive (BBK). In that case you can find the warning on warnung.bund.de/meldungen – all-clears stay there for six hours (BBK).

Setting up a warning app

Phone alerts are only sent in special danger situations (BBK guide) and are short. That is why the BBK recommends also installing the NINA warning app (BBK). How to set it up well:

- **Subscribe to places:** home and work, plus school or nursery and where your parents or other relatives live. You won't get warnings for other places (BBK).
- **Allow notifications** – for your current location as well, if you like. The location is checked only on the device and isn't stored on a server (BBK).
- **Get warnings from the lowest level:** the BBK recommends switching on civil-protection warnings from "hazard information" (Gefahreninformation).
- **On the iPhone** the BBK also advises: in the notification settings for NINA, allow "Critical Alerts" (so a warning can be heard in Do Not Disturb mode), switch on "Critical Alarm" in the app under civil-protection warnings, turn on background app refresh, set location to "Always", and in the

App Store settings turn off "Offload Unused Apps". For reliable warnings in everyday life it recommends turning off Low Power Mode.

- **On Android** the BBK publishes its own guide to notifications and battery settings – the link is on the BBK's NINA page.

In Bereitsein you choose up to six districts or independent cities under Warnings – for example home, work, school and relatives. Bereitsein loads the official warnings from NINA when you open the app. In the Android app it also checks in the background about every 30 minutes when notifications are on, and tells you about new warnings – Android may delay this to save battery. The latest status is saved and can be read without a network. For immediate, round-the-clock warnings you still need Cell Broadcast and a warning app. Bereitsein's warnings cover Germany only.

Radio: your link to the outside world

When the mobile network and internet are down, warning apps and phone alerts go down with them – but radio stations keep working (BBK guide). That is why every household should have a **battery, solar or wind-up radio**, with spare batteries (BBK guide). The car radio counts too.

- **Note your stations:** write down the frequencies of your local stations and keep the note with your radio and torch, where you can find it in the dark (UK Government, Be Ready). Some towns name the stations they use for information on their website – Münster, for example, names two local stations (City of Münster).
- **Backup power at the transmitter:** some stations are well protected. In Bavaria, for example, the large transmitter sites of Bayerischer Rundfunk have diesel for seven days (City of Nuremberg). Your station can tell you how things stand where you live.
- **Phone as a radio?** Radio apps that stream over the internet go down with the network. A separate radio is the safe choice. More on radio in a power cut: Power cut.

Contacts and agreements

In an emergency the whole family is rarely in one place. So you need agreements that work without a network too.

- **A contact person outside the region:** everyone in the household checks in with them. They collect the messages and know who is where (FEMA, Government of Canada). The family plan has a dedicated contact for this.
- **Numbers on paper:** a printed or handwritten list helps if you can't get at your stored contacts (BBK guide). It should include family, neighbours, doctor, care service, property management, the electricity network operator and emergency numbers (Verbraucherzentrale). Keep copies in your wallet, in the car, at work and in the grab bag, and look over the plan once a year (FEMA).
- **Meeting points:** agree on places where you meet if you can't reach each other (UK Government, Be Ready). How to choose three good meeting points is in the guide Evacuation and family plan.
- **"If nobody can be reached":** in one or two sentences in the family plan, write down what each person does then – in a way children understand. For example: go to meeting point 1 and wait there on the hour, leave a note with the time and destination, check in with the contact person

as soon as possible. Fixed times mean nobody has to wait all day or keep their phone switched on.

- **A message template:** think about what belongs in a short message: who, how you are, where you are, what happens next. The same goes for calls: keep it short and give only vital information (Government of Canada). For example: "I'm OK. At work. Going to meeting point 2."
- **Share the plan:** print the family plan or pass it from phone to phone by QR code, no internet needed.

Battery and power for your phone

- **Power bank:** charged, with the right cable. It lets you charge your phone or laptop during a power cut (BBK guide). Recharge power banks, rechargeable batteries and spare batteries regularly, especially when storms are forecast (Verbraucherzentrale). Solar chargers are a useful addition (BBK).
- **Keep devices charged:** phone, laptop and cordless phones (BBK).
- **Stay reachable:** if a crisis affects you, keep your phone able to receive calls and messages at night too (BBK guide).
- **When power runs short:** use devices sparingly until you can recharge, and avoid the phone's torch – it drains the battery faster; use a real torch instead (UK Government, Be Ready). Get your information from the radio then.

More tips on phones in a power cut are in the guide Power cut.

Landline and internet phone in a power cut

The old analogue landline used to keep working for several hours in a power cut. Now that calls run over the internet (Voice over IP), the router, fibre connection and phone all need power – when it goes, the phone at home falls silent (BBK power cut, Verbraucherzentrale). Services such as **home emergency alarms** (Hausnotruf) can also be disrupted or fail (BBK power cut). If you rely on one, ask your provider what happens in a power cut, and agree with relatives and neighbours who will check on you.

In the UK, vulnerable customers – for example telecare users – should get a free back-up battery from their provider that keeps a landline working for at least an hour in a power cut (UK Government, Be Ready).

Know your municipality's help points

It helps to know where you can get information locally in an emergency – for example at the town hall or an emergency meeting point (BBK guide). Many municipalities in Germany call such help points **disaster lighthouses** (Katastrophenschutz-Leuchttürme); you can also make an emergency call there if the phone network fails (BBK power cut). What they are called and what they offer varies from place to place:

- In **Berlin**, disaster lighthouses only open in a danger situation, such as a long power cut, and the opening is announced separately. They carry a uniform nationwide logo, and emergency calls

can be made there (State of Berlin). In Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg they offer information on the situation and on self-help; emergency calls are passed on to the fire service or police (Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district office).

- In **Baden-Württemberg**, emergency meeting points are meant to offer shelter, first aid, current information and basics such as water and food (Baden-Württemberg Ministry of the Interior).
- In **Nuremberg** they are called emergency information points; they run on backup power and are spread across the city within walking distance (City of Nuremberg). **Münster** has emergency reporting points, for example at fire and police stations (City of Münster).

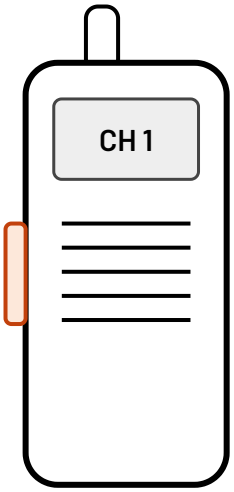
They don't exist everywhere yet – in some Berlin districts they are still being planned or are not yet ready (State of Berlin, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district office). Ask your municipality, print out the location and add it to the family plan as an important place. If you can't make an emergency call and there is no help point: in an emergency, go to the nearest police station or hospital if you can (BBK guide). In the UK the government gives the same advice and adds fire and ambulance stations (UK Government, Be Ready).

Two-way radios: PMR446

If you are close to each other but have no network – in the building, in the neighbourhood, on the way to the meeting point – simple handheld **PMR446** radios can help. The key facts:

- **No registration, no individual licence:** in Germany, the Federal Network Agency has assigned the 446.0 to 446.2 MHz band "for use by the general public" (general assignment Vfg. 91/2025, valid until the end of 2035). Across Europe, PMR446 radios are exempt from individual licensing; anyone may use them and take them across borders (ECC).
- **Low power, built-in antenna:** at most 500 milliwatts. Only hand-portable devices with a built-in antenna are allowed – no base station, no repeater, no network (Federal Network Agency, ECC).
- **Short range:** the radios are designed for short distances, device to device (Federal Network Agency, ECC). How far they reach depends a lot on buildings and terrain – try it out.
- **Shared channels:** analogue radios use channels 12.5 kHz apart, which gives 16 channels in the band (ECC). Everyone shares the same frequencies without coordination, and on any one channel only one person can talk at a time while the others listen (ECC).

PMR446 AT A GLANCE



- ✓ **Licence-free in Europe**
- 446.0–446.2 MHz
- Max. 500 mW
- Built-in antenna only
- ✗ **No repeater, no network**
- 16 analogue channels
- Only one talks at a time

Agree on a channel
and write it down

PMR446 at a glance: licence-free, 446.0 to 446.2 megahertz, at most 500 milliwatts, built-in antenna, no repeater, 16 analogue channels, only one person talks at a time. Agree on a channel in advance and write it down.

How to use them: agree on a channel in advance and write it down – for example in the family plan under "If nobody can be reached" and on the note in the grab bag. Switching on at fixed times saves batteries. Keep spare batteries with them and test the radios now and then. Everyone shares the channels – anyone nearby can listen, so don't pass on anything confidential.

Amateur (ham) radio is something different: in Germany you need an exam with the Federal Network Agency, a licence and your own call sign. Since June 2024 there have been dedicated call signs for members of emergency organisations who use amateur radio in emergencies and disasters (Federal Network Agency). It's not a must for family preparedness.

Variations for your household

With a hearing impairment

- Sirens and radio may not reach you, or only poorly – which makes **phone alerts and a warning app** all the more important. Cell Broadcast combines sound, a visual signal and vibration (BBK).
- The official German emergency-call app **nora** lets you make an emergency call without speaking. Register in advance (BBK guide).
- **Smoke alarms with vibration and light alerts** are available for people with hearing impairments (BBK guide).
- An **emergency ID card** can show how people can communicate with you; pen and paper help when talking to emergency services (BBK guide).
- The BBK also offers information on warnings in **German Sign Language** (BBK).

- Talk to neighbours and family about how they can let you know in an emergency (BBK guide).
- In the UK: if accessibility notifications are switched on, Emergency Alerts use sound and vibration to alert people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted (GOV.UK).

With a visual impairment

- Radio, and the sound and vibration of phone alerts, don't need a look at the screen (BBK). Check whether your phone's accessibility settings read alerts aloud.
- Spare batteries and chargers for assistive devices belong in your preparations (BBK guide).
- Think about who will support you if you can't use escape routes on your own (BBK guide).

With children

- **Before the warning day,** talk to children and explain that it's only a test (BBK).
- **Ask about the school's or nursery's emergency plan,** and decide who may pick the children up if you can't (Government of Canada).
- **Children know their contact details:** name, address and a phone number (Government of Canada). A note with numbers goes in the school bag. Be honest about what it's about and make the plan together (Government of Canada). More in the guide Children in a crisis.

Older people and people who need care

- **Check your parents' phone:** older devices may not receive Cell Broadcast (Federal Government). Also subscribe to their home town in your own warning app.
- **Pass on warnings:** not everyone may have received the information (BBK guide). Agree with neighbours who checks on whom, especially people who live alone (UK Government, Be Ready).
- Loud warning signals can frighten older people too – let them know before the warning day (BBK).
- More in the guides Care & pets and Helping your neighbours.

If German isn't your first language

- **Phone alerts** in Germany come in German and English (BBK). The most important content of the **NINA** app is available in Arabic, English, French, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Turkish, plus German in Easy Language (BBK).
- The **BBK preparedness guide** is being translated into seven languages, plus Easy Language and German Sign Language (BBK, 10/2025).
- People who have fled war may find loud warning signals especially distressing. The BBK advises preparing them before the warning day (BBK).

With pets

- Prepare animals for loud, sudden noises before the warning day (BBK).

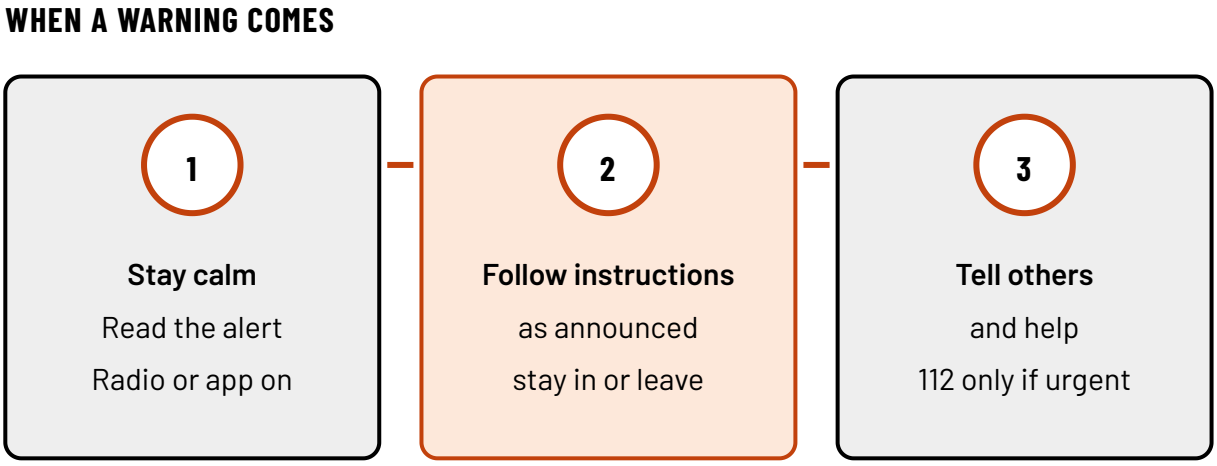
Sources for this section: BBK guide (11/2025), BBK "Cell Broadcast", "Cell Broadcast: Technische Informationen", "Cell Broadcast: Entwarnung", "Warn-App NINA", "Warn-App NINA – Einstellung für iOS", "Bundesweiter Warntag", "Emergency information sources for international visitors", BBK press release (10/2025), BBK "Stromausfall – Vorsorge und Selbsthilfe", BBK "Vorsorge und Handeln bei Stromausfall", district of Gütersloh (12/2022), Federal Government (9/2026), Federal Network Agency Vfg. 91/2025 and "Amateurfunk", ECC/DEC/(15)05, Verbraucherzentrale (1/2026), State of Berlin, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district office, Baden-Württemberg Ministry of the Interior (9/2022), City of Nuremberg (9/2026), City of Münster, FEMA, Government of Canada (9/2025), UK Government "Be Ready", GOV.UK "Emergency Alerts".

IN AN EMERGENCY

When a warning comes

Every official warning includes advice on what to do – suited to the situation (BBK). So read first, then act:

1. **Stay calm and read the warning.** Follow the short instructions in the message as far as you can (BBK).
2. **Find out more.** A phone alert has only a few characters. Switch on the radio (local station), open the warning app or warnung.bund.de (BBK).
3. **Follow the instructions.** Depending on the situation, for example: with toxic smoke, go into a closed room and shut windows and doors; leave buildings that are at risk of collapse; keep away from damaged power poles (BBK).
4. **In the car or on a bike,** don't read the alert while moving. Stop somewhere safe first – or listen to the radio (GOV.UK).
5. **Tell others.** Pass official warnings on to neighbours, friends and family – not everyone may have received them (BBK guide). Help people who need help (City of Münster).
6. **Keep the emergency lines free.** Only call 110 or 112 in a real emergency, not for information (City of Münster).
7. **Stay reachable** and keep your phone able to receive at night too (BBK guide).



When a warning comes, in three steps: 1. Stay calm, read the alert, switch on the radio or app. 2. Follow the authorities' instructions. 3. Tell others and help, call 112 only if it is urgent.

When the siren sounds

The siren only says: there is a danger. What is going on, you find out from the radio, an app or announcements. The City of Münster describes the steps like this:

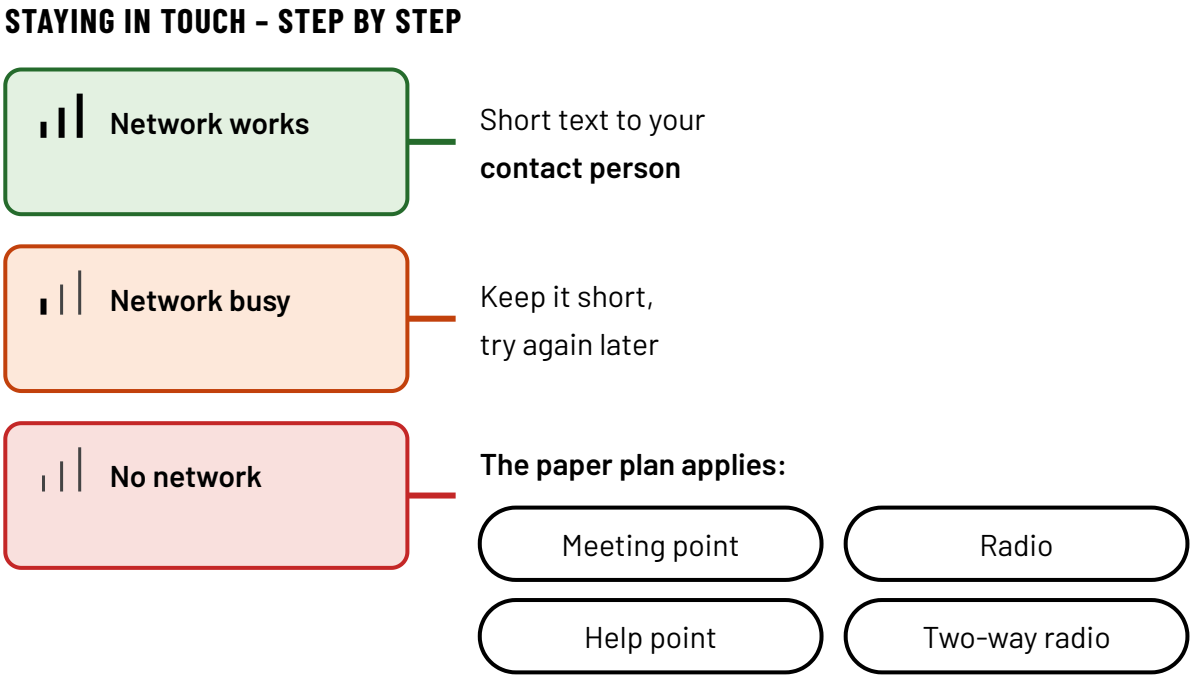
1. Stay calm.
2. Go into a building.
3. Inform your neighbours.
4. Close doors and windows, switch off air conditioning and ventilation.
5. Switch on the radio – in a power cut, a car or battery radio.
6. Help people who need help and children, take in passers-by.
7. Don't block 110 and 112 with enquiries.

If the warning says something different – for example to leave an area – the warning applies. How an evacuation works is in the guide Evacuation and family plan.

Reaching your family

1. **One short text to the contact person** – not to everyone individually, and text rather than call (FEMA, Government of Canada). Under Emergency, Bereitsein sends a text to the mobile numbers in your plan with one tap, with your location if you like.
2. **Only the essentials:** who, how you are, where you are, where you are going. If you have to call, keep it short (Government of Canada).
3. **Don't keep redialling.** Keep calls to the essentials – it frees up the network for emergency calls (BBK power cut).
4. **No signal?** Moving a short distance can improve the signal. If Wi-Fi still works, Wi-Fi calling might work too (UK Government, Be Ready).

5. **Nobody reachable?** Then your plan applies: "If nobody can be reached", meeting point, fixed times. Nobody needs to be reachable for everyone to know where to go.



Staying in touch step by step: if the network works, a short text to the contact person. If it is busy, keep it short and try again later. If nothing works, the paper plan applies: meeting point, radio, help point, two-way radio nearby.

When the network is down completely

- **Radio** is now your source of information. Switching on at fixed times saves batteries. Pass on what you hear – not everyone has a radio.
- **Go to the meeting point** as agreed. Leave a note: who, when, where to.
- **Two-way radios** for short distances: on the agreed channel, at the agreed times.
- **Be seen and heard:** if you are trapped or need to attract attention, your phone flashes SOS with its light or sounds a whistle under Signal – no network needed.
- **Emergency call without a phone:** go to your municipality's help point, otherwise to the nearest police station or hospital (BBK guide, BBK power cut).

Rumours and false reports

In unclear situations, contradictory and false information circulates, especially on social media – some of it is spread deliberately. The more dramatic a report, the faster it is shared (BBK guide). So: **check before you forward.** Who published it first? Is the source reputable – is there an imprint with a name and address? Are facts backed up (BBK guide)? Rely on official warnings: a phone alert names the authority that sent it, and all warnings can be checked on warnung.bund.de (BBK). In the UK, the Emergency Alerts service will never email you or ask for personal details (GOV.UK).

Emergency calls

A power cut or a warning on its own is **not an emergency**. During past power cuts in Germany, the emergency number was often dialled for information, and real emergency calls were delayed (BBK power cut). Only call 110 or 112 when there really is danger. How an emergency call works and what the control centre will ask is in the guide First aid.

Sources for this section: BBK guide (11/2025), BBK "Cell Broadcast", "Wann und wovor warnen deutsche Behörden?", BBK "Stromausfall – Vorsorge und Selbsthilfe", City of Münster, GOV.UK "Emergency Alerts", UK Government "Be Ready", FEMA, Government of Canada (9/2025).

AFTERWARDS

The all-clear

- **Siren:** one minute of steady tone (BBK).
- **Phone:** since 25 November 2025, the all-clear in Germany is also sent by Cell Broadcast. It is always sent at the lowest level, "hazard information", so that it is quieter – the subject line reads "ENTWARNUNG" (or "ALL CLEAR" if your phone is set to English). It is a little shorter than the warning and doesn't link to the original message (BBK).
- **No all-clear received?** That can happen if you left the radio cell, switched off warning level 3, your phone was off or in flight mode, or you were in a dead spot. The other way round, you can get an all-clear without ever having received the warning – because you were somewhere else when the warning went out (BBK). If in doubt: warnung.bund.de/meldungen or the radio.
- **All-clear doesn't mean "everything is back to normal".** Disruption can continue, and after-effects can make a new warning necessary. Stay alert (BBK).

Restocking and improving

1. **Charge and restock:** charge your power bank and phone, replace batteries in radio, torch and two-way radios.
2. **Sit down together:** what worked? Did the warning reach everyone? Who couldn't be reached, and why?
3. **Update the plan:** numbers, contact person, meeting points, radio channel – change them in the family plan, print it again and share it again by QR code.
4. **Give feedback:** after the nationwide warning day, the BBK runs an online survey about people's experiences (Federal Government).
5. **Practise:** repeat the "Radio and warning check" in the Drill section by the next warning day at the latest.

Sources for this section: BBK "Sirenen", "Cell Broadcast: Entwarnung", BBK press release (11/2025), "Wann und wovor warnen deutsche Behörden?", Federal Government (9/2026).

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Relying on your phone alone.** Without power and network there are no phone alerts, no app, no internet radio.
- **Switching off the lowest warning level** – then you miss the all-clear too.
- **Putting off system updates.** Older software may not receive Cell Broadcast.
- **Only using your current location in the warning app** and not subscribing to home, school or your parents' town.
- **Calling 110 or 112 when the siren sounds to ask what is going on.** It blocks the line for real emergencies.
- **Everyone calling everyone,** again and again, instead of one short text to the contact person.
- **Keeping numbers only in your phone.** When the battery is flat, they are gone.
- **No radio in the house** – or only one that runs off the mains.
- **Forwarding rumours** before checking the source.
- **Ticking everything off straight after the all-clear.** After-effects and new warnings are possible.
- **Buying two-way radios but never agreeing on a channel,** and leaving them in a cupboard with flat batteries.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Phone system updates installed
- [ ] Cell Broadcast switched on, including "hazard information"
- [ ] Warning app installed, notifications allowed
- [ ] Places subscribed: home, work, school or nursery, relatives
- [ ] Districts chosen in Bereitsein under "Warnings"
- [ ] Battery, solar or wind-up radio with spare batteries
- [ ] Local station frequency written down, kept with the radio
- [ ] Everyone in the household knows the siren signals
- [ ] Asked the municipality about local sirens and special signals
- [ ] Contact person outside the region asked and added
- [ ] Phone numbers on paper – wallet, grab bag, school bag
- [ ] "If nobody can be reached" agreed, with fixed times
- [ ] Meeting points agreed
- [ ] Power bank charged, with cable
- [ ] Home emergency alarm: checked with the provider what happens in a power cut
- [ ] Municipal help point or emergency meeting point known
- [ ] If you have them: PMR446 radios, channel agreed, spare batteries

- [ ] School or nursery emergency plan asked about
- [ ] Parents' phone and warning app checked
- [ ] "Radio and warning check" done, repeat on the next warning day

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All links checked on 5 November 2026.

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