

Strathcona County Alerts 2019 Fall Survey Research Results



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Communications

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In October 2019, Strathcona County conducted a survey to measure perceptions associated with its *Strathcona County Alerts* program. Awareness of the SC Alerts program has been actively monitored through the annual satisfaction survey since 2016. The present survey, however, goes into greater detail on the use of the program, as it looks at participation in the Alerts program, how people learned about the it, as well as two other emergency related questions. This is the second year that this stand-alone survey has been conducted, so comparisons will be made with questions that were asked in the 2018 survey to see if changes in safety patterns have occurred.

Obtaining primary data directly from residents provides Strathcona County departments with information and enables County officials to make decisions that accurately reflect the perspectives and attitudes of residents. This report provides a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results.

A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. The questionnaire, sampling design and data collection procedure

The questionnaire used in this study was previously created by representatives from *Emergency Services*. The survey was made available through an open online survey where information was gathered with Survey Gizmo. The online survey ran between October 8th and October 21st, 2019, during which 331

people took part in the survey.¹ Please note that no demographic information was collected in the survey.

The sample for the survey provided overall results accurate to within $\pm 5.4\%$, 19 times out of 20.² The data was analyzed by Strathcona County's Communications using SPSS for Windows.

III. RESULTS

A. Use of SC Alerts

Initially, respondents were asked to indicate whether they currently received SC Alerts. Overall, in 2019, 97.9% stated that they were receiving them, while the remaining 2.1% (7 people) were not. In comparison with 2018, 87.7% stated that they were receiving them. As such, there is a 10.2% increase in 2019 among citizens making use of this service.

In 2019, the seven people who said that they were not were then asked to indicate why they had not signed up. Of these people:

- 2 of them did not know about the SC Alerts program;
- 1 person did not know how to sign up;
- 3 people indicated that they had not received alerts or only sometimes received them; and
- 1 person indicated that they didn't want to be alerted about snow removal updates as they could see the street signs.

Once people who did not receive alerts indicated why they did not, they were informed via a pop-up message how to sign up to receive SC Alerts, which informed them that alerts can be received by text, email and/or a phone call.

¹ It should be noted that for the open-ended questions, many respondents chose not to provide insight into County issues, even though everyone had an opportunity to do so.

² The $\pm 5.4\%$ is the *margin of error* associated with this study and refers to the potential percentage spread that exists within answers to particular questions. This means that an answer could be up to 5.4% higher or lower than what is reported. Please note, however, that the data was gathered through an online survey and no controls were undertaken to make this a random sample.

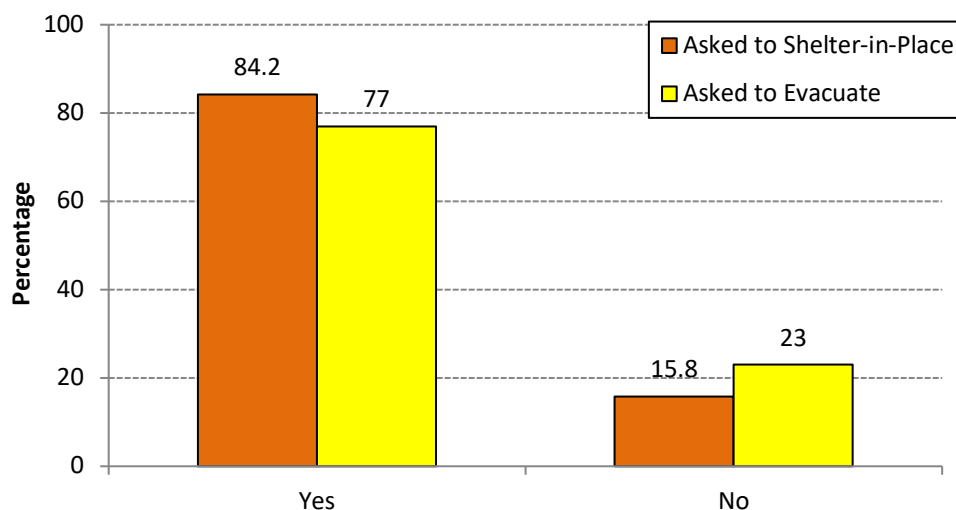
All respondents were then asked to indicate their awareness that SC Alerts are only sent to the addresses that they had in their profile. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that they were aware of this aspect of SC Alerts (84.3%), compared to the 15.7% who did not.

Those who received SC Alerts were asked to provide comments about them. Of the 331 respondents, 91 provided comments, with the majority of these being positive. A full list of these comments can be found in Appendix A of this report.

B. Emergency Procedures

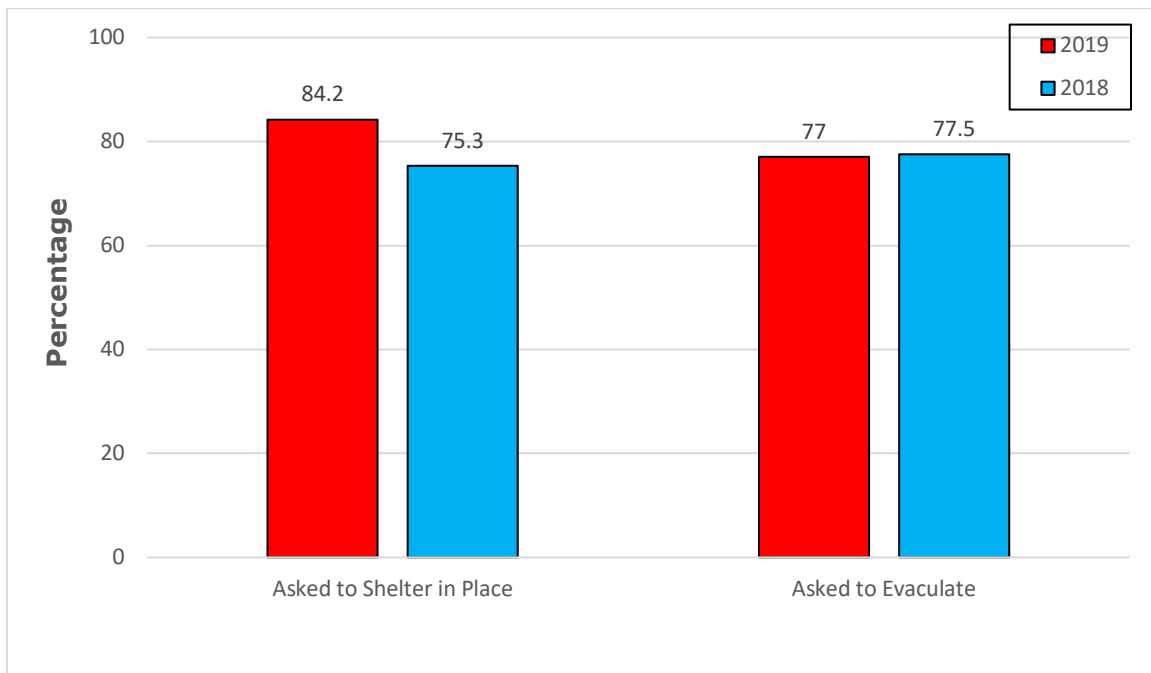
All respondents (regardless of whether they received SC Alerts) were asked if they knew what to do if asked to “shelter-in-place” as well as if asked to evacuate. The results are shown in Figure 1 below. It can be seen that in 2019, the majority of residents felt they knew what to do in either scenario.

FIGURE 1
Awareness of what to do in an emergency – 2019 results



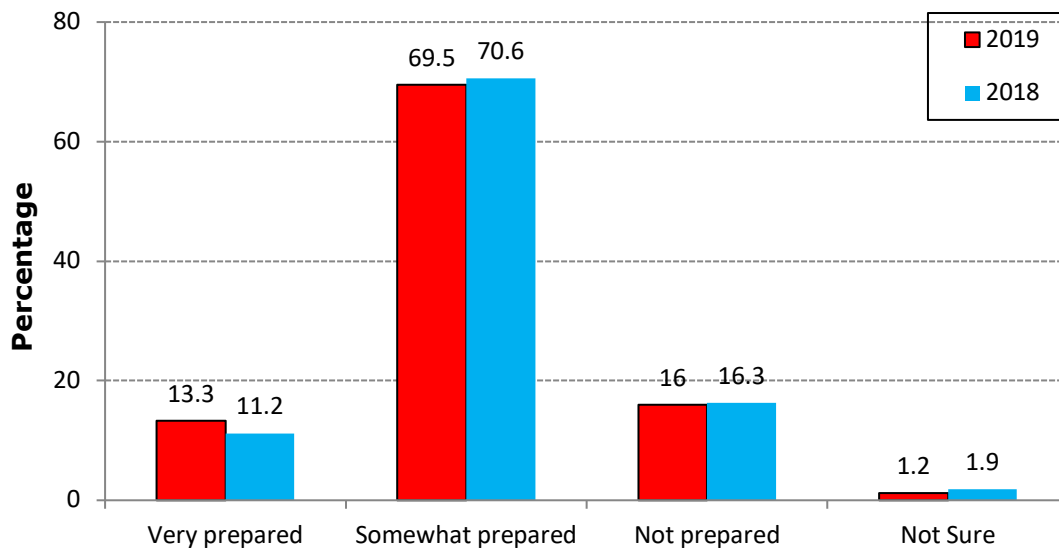
A comparison between 2018 and 2019 for knowing what to do with “shelter-in-place” is shown in Figure 2. It can be seen that in 2019, a greater percentage of citizens indicated that they knew about “shelter in place” compared to 2018. There was no change in awareness of what to do if they were “asked to evacuate” between 2018 and 2019.

FIGURE 2
Awareness of those who knew what to do in an emergency
Comparison of 2018 and 2019 results



A comparison between 2018 and 2019 for citizens' level of preparedness is shown in Figure 3. It can be seen that there is virtually no difference between 2018 and 2019 for this, as the majority of people felt that they were "somewhat prepared" in each year.

FIGURE 3
Level of preparedness to make oneself safe in the event of an emergency



All respondents were asked to indicate why they answered their preparedness the way that they did. Overall, those who are very prepared are following the guidelines suggested to them, or at least are aware of what they need to do. Some have indicated that they have learned from being in past emergency situations (not necessarily in Strathcona County). Many of those who stated that they were not prepared indicated that this was because they did not have an emergency kit prepared or had not determined their evacuation procedures (even though they knew they should have done this). A full list of the reasons associated with preparedness is summarized in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A: OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

A. Reasons for feeling prepared/not prepared

Very Prepared (As rated by 44 people, with 34 of them providing reasons)

- Always have emergency kit and full tank of gas in vehicles to leave at a moment's notice
- Always try to plan for the unexpected. Built out house to withstand up to and F4 tornado and is very fire resistant (i.e. Brick and rubber roof). I also follow the news and weather very closely. Have enough supplies to shelter in place for a week.
- Been through a number of cyclones, have trained the family and have kit and supplies
- Been through situations like this before. Also have industrial training
- Community education on preparing
- Done research and have assembled needed supplies/kits etc.
- Emergency management and preparedness are part of my job.
- Extensive experience in Emergency Management
- For work we have an ERP in place
- Have a supply of med's available. Have a supply of food/water available. Keep our gas tank filled. Remind ourselves mentally once in a while of what we would do.
- Have emergency kit (survival) all set. Water, canned food crackers, etc.
- Have our medications to game, water, and food stuffs
- Have place to go in house for severe storm and evacuation routes for other
- I am trained in both aspects and feel comfortable dealing with both.
- I have an emergency plan
- I have been informed of how to prepare for these types of situations and given enough warning
- I have resources available that would make it easy for me to evacuate.
- I read all the alerts and take them very helpful. There is always enough information to make me aware of what the threat is and what to do.
- I was in the past Tornado
- Informed citizen.
- I've received a lot of information on the news and on the Internet as there have been so many fires the last couple of years. Also, there have been tornadoes in many places, and there is always information before and after on the TV.

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- My family is aware of what to do and where to go to stay safe and we have provisions in our home to sustain us for a period of time if we have no access to stores or no power
 - My wife and I have long established that the items we own are just 'stuff'. Pack the kids in the truck and drive away is how we look at it. Everything else can be replaced.
 - Our family has thought about what to do in case of said emergencies. Have food and water for at least 72 hours
 - Stockpiles of food and water, emergency info accessible, etc.
 - We are both excellent problem solvers. We have supplies to carries through an emergency.
 - We have a family action plan and 72hr kits and other emergency preparations.
 - We have an ERP that we review and practice every month.
 - We have enough emergency supplies to last 30+days. We can evacuate very quickly.
 - We have enough of everything we need for some time.
 - We have food & water for at least a week. We have basement shelter. We have mobile means to leave the area.
 - We have our emergency plans in place and know where to go and what to do.
 - We keep well informed and make sure are staff is trained and review the process.
 - We've got plans in place.

Somewhat Prepared (As rated by 230 people, with 110 of them providing reasons)

- At present time things are not organized. I am working on it.
- because I have been paying attention
- because I should be more prepared and it is very important
- Because of the many emergencies that could occur, I am not 100 % sure I will do/know what to do in every scenario.
- Can always be more prepared. Am more than some
- Could do better in actually practicing our plan at home.
- Depends on actual emergency
- Depends on how long the emergency lasts and how devastating the damage is

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- Didn't know that the county offered these courses.
 - Do not always keep kits up to date.
 - Do not Currently have an emergency ration/supply set up, or a 'bug-out-bag'. Will look at your information and adjust my supplies accordingly.
 - Do not have a complete emergency prep plan in place at this time.
 - Do not have emergency kit (mentioned by 4 different people)
 - Documents all together but not a to-go medical or personal bag ready.
 - Don't have documents together but I do have lots of food on hand. No generator and I do not buy bottled water..
 - Don't think about it often enough!
 - Emergency kits are incomplete.
 - Even if you've actually been there done that, it's new again as every situation is somewhat different
 - Have a basic plan; would be able to build on it depending on the emergency
 - Have an evacuation, shelter in place plan as well as supplies
 - Have discussed a plan, but still need a few items stored in event of shelter in place
 - Have emergency items available but not packed ready to go.
 - Have small kids so always some unknowns
 - have thought about preparedness but not taken as much action towards being prepared. will look at website and course in above question - thank you
 - Have yet to assemble an emergency preparedness kit.
 - I believe we could always do more to prepare ourselves in case of an emergency.
 - I can find shelter, but I may not have provisions for a long stay.
 - I could prepare more by having an emergency bag together ready to go if we ever needed to leave right away.
 - I could shelter in place because we have food and water and could keep ourselves warm. If we had to evacuate, it would take time to prepare what we would need to take with us.
 - I did take the free emergency preparedness course last year but have not completed all of the necessary steps yet. But it will be done soon.
 - I don't currently have enough water but everything else we are good
 - I don't have anything actually prepped.
 - I don't keep provisions on hand as I should.
 - I feel I have a general understanding but would not be sure of situation specific needs or expectations.

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- I feel we are prepared to shelter in place, but to evacuate maybe not so much. We do not have an emergency kit that we can access quickly. We have no plans or equipment to evacuate our animals.
 - I guess it would depend on the kind of emergency I was dealing with then I could determine how prepared I am.
 - I guess one begins to become passive when not being confronted with situations on a continual basis like some people in other areas. It's great that you remind us periodically to refresh and review our plans.
 - I have a safe place to go, and food, etc. but I don't have it all readily available and ready to go in the event I had to grab something and leave
 - I have an idea of what to do, and some things that I need are ready, but it would still take longer than it should to respond.
 - I have food supplies and a 72 hour kit. I do not always have enough dog food.
 - I have had training from a place I worked at, I have taken some safety courses and feel that in an emergency we are somewhat prepared. We have larger animals so some of my worry is for them.
 - I have never been in an emergency situation
 - I have not actually built out a personal plan to evacuate
 - I have not done a dry run for this particular event.
 - I have not reviewed our procedures for a while. Thanks for the reminder.
 - I have some food, a safe place and somewhat of a plan if these things happen.
 - i have some things in place (food, clothing, papers) just not the water. I need to have a better solution for storing water and being able to take it with us
 - I knew what evacuate means but I guess I would need to know where to go. Suppose that totally depends on the event
 - I know the information is readily available but I haven't taken the time to ensure we would be completely prepared - I should do a mock drill or something like that.
 - I know there are things I should have ready but haven't actually done some of them
 - I know what I need to take in a hurry. I know where I would try to go, depending on the situation, but I would need some time to gather those items and would need some direction as to what roads are accessible and which are blocked.
 - I know what to do but have not updated my emergency kit in a while. Need to refresh water and prescriptions.

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- I moved here a year ago and need to reassemble my Go Bag and get the food and water organized. This would be a good reminder. I was in the Fort McMurray wildfire and can appreciate the need to be prepared.
 - I pretty much know what to take but it may take me a little while to organize it all as things are in different places.
 - I probably don't have enough water on hand
 - I still have important documents that need to be added to my escape box
 - I think we know what to do to shelter in place. However, we don't have a bag of essentials packed if we need to leave.
 - I took boy scouts as a kid. BE PREPARED!
 - I'm prepared if there was an emergency around home, but not too sure should we be out and about
 - In case of evacuation, I would not be sure where I should go, or what to take. I also don't think I have quite enough supplies to shelter in place for 48 hours.
 - Is anyone ever absolutely prepared?
 - It's hard to know how prepared we are without actually experiencing it. Wildfire happens so fast, during fire ban season we discuss what to do, but we don't have any training.
 - It's never happened so I don't know how prepared I am really without experiencing it.
 - I've never faced an emergency evacuation and really didn't think about it until now! I'll start learning now. Thanks for the information!!
 - I've never received any info about county plans for emergency so while we have supplies here that we could pack up and leave, I wouldn't know where to go. Perhaps that's a last minute decision on county's part? I don't know.
 - Just myself I would sit on the basement stairs for an Tornado so I am sure to get back out maybe not the greatest place to be but the basement would not get ripped out .
 - know where to go in my house but don't really have any provisions i.e. water there. Something to think about and do
 - Living on the top floor of a condo building, I'm not sure where would be the safest place to go in case of a tornado. In a room without windows, yes... but on a top floor? Sounds scary.
 - My grab and go bag is not totally stocked.
 - need more info as to where to go
 - Need to gather necessities in one location for evacuation.
 - Need to refresh
 - Never fully prepared

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- Never really know 100% until you are tested.
 - No supplies stocked
 - Not everything is in one spot for taking
 - Not quite ready for short term shelter in place or evacuate. Need to prepare ability to respond rapidly (meds, docs, pets, food/water, gasoline)
 - Not something we spend time dwelling on but reasonably confident in being able to get done what needs to be done if situation arose.
 - Not sure (mentioned by 2 people)
 - Not sure if I should go down into my crawlspace in event of a tornado. I'm not sure if that is safe to be down there (gas lines running in floor joists) and I don't want to be trapped down there.
 - not sure what 'visit our website' means
 - On my own. Senior with some disabilities.
 - One can always be more prepared. I will definitely review my personal plan, nice that I have been reminded. Thank you
 - One can't really be well prepared for every eventuality. So many variables. I was in festival place the night of the community centre event. I was not prepared. Neither did I think evacuating us all slowly along the one exit road was a great strategy. Perhaps we should have sheltered in place? Perhaps that area is poorly constructed to enable mass evacuation given all the residences, businesses and cultural/sports attractions.
 - Our only issue would be good and water issues, as I do not stock up on these items.
 - Read & understand information.
 - Seniors, no transportation.
 - Some experience from the tornado in the 80's.
 - Somewhat prepared because of common sense and education, but limited by that of others
 - That's what I think.
 - The one I struggle with the most is water, other than that we are quite ready.
 - There is a very small likelihood of any serious incidents happening here
 - There is a lot of information circulating during summer and winter months about what to do in the event of a tornado for instance so I feel I am prepared as to what to do in this event.
 - There is on-going training for these situations in the workplace
 - We always make sure we have food and water and gas.

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- We are ok for a day or so but if it lasted longer; say a week, we might be struggling.
 - We are renovating and important items aren't necessarily stored in an easily accessible area.
 - We don't have a completed and updated kit ready
 - We have a bag packed and an emergency supply of water
 - We have a secure area in the house close to a food supply.
 - We have ample water and food to last a good week
 - We have an adequate non-perishable food stash if needed, but we don't have an emergency bag filled with essentials nor is it packed with clothes, blankets etc. We'd have to scramble quickly if needed.
 - We have need supplies on hand and periodically update them, but sometimes get behind despite our best intentions.
 - We have supplies ready
 - We need to have an emergency kit!
 - With several small kids it's hard to feel fully prepared.

Not Prepared (As rated by 53 people, with 30 of them providing reasons)

- What do we do if we live in a modular home?
- WE have NO plan or ever talked about it. We have individual ideas though.
- We do not have an emergency plan as a family or for our pets in case of an emergency. This survey has made me realize I need to create an emergency plan for my family and pets.
- We do not have an emergency pack prepared
- We do not have a designated supply of food and water for emergencies, and only have a tentative evacuation plan
- So many unknown factors
- Simply have not gotten around to it unfortunately.
- No sure what to do to prepare for an evacuation and do know where to evacuate to.
- No safety supplies or plan in place.
- No real emergency plan in place
- No emergency supplies stocked
- Never gave it any thought until now!
- My household is disorganized at the moment.
- Kit not complete, e.g. no radio

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- Just not sure on what to prepare, haven't put much thought into it
 - Just haven't done anything to get prepared.
 - I'm not educated in this regard
 - I would like a pamphlet that I can keep handy with information I need
 - I think I could always be more prepared than I am.
 - I should probably prepare a kit to be able to grab & take with us if we are ever evacuated.
 - I just don't have the kit put together, but I did see the literature when it first came out on what to pack (per person) for 72hrs. I don't remember everything on the list either, so I likely would miss items or not have time to grab them in the case of an evacuation.
 - I haven't put all important stuff in one place or talked to my family about what to do
 - I have never really thought of it before this alert. I will work with my family to address this asap. Thank you!
 - I have elderly parents living without assistance and I worry about how I would assist them along with my children who may be at school.
 - I guess I feel this way as I have not had to experience being sheltered-in-place, tornado, wildfire, or being evacuated.
 - I am disabled and would require help to evacuate. Emergency personal would be focused on the emergency first and would not help me unless ordered to.
 - Haven't prepared an emergency evacuate kit.
 - Figure it won't happen.
 - Do not have anything prepared in case of evacuation or if there is a tornado
 - Currently have no ready-to-grab bugout bags or kits

Not Sure (As rated by 4 people, with 2 of them providing reasons)

- Unsure of where to go to in evacuation
- I'm a single senior living alone. I wouldn't know what to take or where to go. I would need assistance.

B. Other Comments about the SC Alert system (as noted by 91 of the 331 respondents)**Positive Comments**

- Alerts now seem to be at an appropriate level - nothing beyond what I signed up for, and they do work (such as in this test).
- All good
- Appreciate getting the alerts.
- Appreciate having this service.
- Appreciate the information
- Excellent job - thank you for keeping us informed
- Excellent tool to have for the County. I support the program 100% and feel it is well administered. Keep up the good work!!
- Excellent...thank you
- Glad to have them.
- Good job
- Good system
- Great job and thanks for info on having more than 1 location!
- Great system
- Appreciate the system.
- I appreciate getting them
- I appreciate receiving the alerts.
- I appreciate the alerts!
- I appreciate the alerts.
- I appreciate this service.
- I believe they provide a necessary service.
- I did receive today's alerts, but none before as I had switched servers, and neglected to change it on here. But now it's all good! Thanks for keeping us all up to date!!
- Helpful, thank you.
- I get the alerts on my phone and by email.
- I love feeling connected
- I really appreciate this service and that regular tests are done on it so that I know I'm getting the alerts.
- I think I did not receive a few bad weather alerts, but I am receiving them again!

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- I think it is great.
 - it is a great idea and it can help somebody
 - just to make sure that I still have it
 - Keep up the good work.
 - Keep up the great Efforts. We believe that all is working well. Many thanks
 - Nice to get them, day or night
 - It's a great thing
 - other than to say they are helpful
 - Please maintain the system.
 - Quite happy that we have this in place as I'm not always able to watch the news/social media so this is quite helpful
 - Seems to work well
 - Snow clearing alerts are particularly helpful
 - Thanks, I appreciate being kept aware of alerts!
 - The alerts and alert testing system are a very valuable resource for me. I am so thankful for this service in case of any emergencies in the area where I reside, especially to help keep my family safe.
 - The alerts have been helpful
 - The system is very helpful
 - The system works well (mentioned by 2 people).
 - They are great. We love them
 - They are useful, they keep me in the know.
 - they have been fine
 - They work fine and are informative
 - They're very helpful, especially fire bans.
 - think they are great
 - Very efficient
 - Very informative
 - Very informative. I am very pleased that I get the SC Alerts.
 - Very satisfied with how it works
 - We are glad to receive them.
 - We are very happy to receive alerts. They are very informative and make you aware of what is happening in SC.
 - We may be on vacation, but it is important to know what is going on in our community and near our home.

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- Worked perfectly good Job guys!
 - Works great for me. Thank you for this service.

System is infrequent

- As far as I remember this is the first alert I have received in the past year.
- First one I've received!
- did not know about them or the process
- do not recall getting any in the last 12 months
- do not remember receiving any or many
- Don't believe I received any
- Have not received any alerts even though have account
- I don't recall getting any alerts besides the test....
- I only received this test today. There have been no alerts that I remember on my phone or computer in the past 12 months. I do get messages from the police on my computer.
- Not sure I've received all of them because I don't remember seeing one in nearly a year.
- There haven't been many. I guess that is a good thing.
- Haven't received any, I believe that none were issued.
- Did I receive any? Precious few. Is there a report available detailing when and why it was used? Was it used for the emerald hills threat for example?

Unnecessary Alerts

- The alerts are too frequent and should be limited to actual emergencies i.e. not weather warnings about possible snowfall or strong winds etc.
- Some may be a little unnecessary, but I prefer to be over warned than be surprised. Thanks.
- I only receive them from work email. I would sign up for my personal device except the feedback I get from other users is that there are just too many alerts that are not really that critical. for example, high or low temp alerts. Most people watch their local weather, so I find these alerts not that useful, and just pesky. I would appreciate them more for just dangerous emergent weather conditions, tornados, etc.
- Cold weather shouldn't be an alert

Other Suggestions/Comments

- I actually would be ok with receiving more alerts for such things as water restrictions (or things of that nature).
- I get alerts on home and cell phone

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- I get test alerts but have never received an amber alert. Is this part of the program?
 - I moved out of SC 2 years ago. I have twice gone online to remove myself from these alerts and am still receiving them despite changing my address.
 - I never received the alert to my phone (text message), only to my email.
 - I'm glad I'm not receiving the freezing rain ones.
 - No complaints/Concerns (3)
 - Should be a different ringer and loud sound I saw it as a text, but I work in a loud cafeteria and didn't hear it.
 - The last call I got there was no message.
 - The recent test alert that I received had an email address of noreply@everbridge.net - given the rise in phishing and other scam emails I would consider changing this to come from a strathcona.ca email address or publishing somewhere on the website that that is the valid email address to receive alerts from.
 - Thought your system wasn't working.

Call display queries

- Yes, it would be nice if call display would show Strathcona County calling. My teens and my elderly parents won't answer the phone if they don't know who is calling.
- Your messages do not display who the call is from. If I don't recognize or if I'm not getting an immediate response when I answer I hang up. Too many spam calls from others.