

# Welcome to FlashAlert Newswire and Messenger

FlashAlert is where emergency information and news releases from a variety of organizations are posted to be sent to news organizations and the public via a continuously updated web page, e-mails and data pushes into media web sites. You can post information from anywhere you have Internet access, targeting a community, state or the entire NW.

## Accessing the System

The main URL is FlashAlert.net (below). The public may click on “[View Local News](#)” to see current postings and, if the org has authorized it, to subscribe to news. If a member of the public has a Messenger account, they can manage that account under “[Manage Your Messenger Subscription](#).” Clients click on the “[Post Your News](#)” link to go to their region’s home page. There also is a link for the news media to learn more.



The screenshot shows the FlashAlert Newswire & Messenger website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the FlashAlert logo and icons for Newswire, Messenger, and a mobile app. Below the navigation bar are five menu items: "View Local News", "Manage Your Messenger Subscription", "Post Your News", "For News Media", and "About FlashAlert". The main content area features a large heading "Welcome to FlashAlert Newswire & Messenger" and a "New and Improved!" section. This section contains three paragraphs describing the system's capabilities: distributing emergency messages, providing information to the media, and allowing the public to subscribe to messages. A map of the United States is displayed, highlighting several regions with city names: Portland, Eugene, Medford, Bend, Boise, Seattle, Spokane, Yakima/Tri-Cities, Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau/Sitka/Ketchikan. A text box on the right of the map asks "got news?" and states "FlashAlert Newswire can put your news into local newsrooms in five minutes or less." Below the map, there is a celebratory message: "Celebrating 38 years of news distribution and ongoing reinvention. It's been just 7 days since FlashAlert's latest upgrade!" At the bottom, a dark blue bar lists various categories: "SCHOOLS ... COLLEGES ... POLICE ... FIRE ... MEDICAL ... UTILITIES ... TRANSPORTATION ... BUSINESSES ... CITIES ... COUNTIES ... STATE ... FEDERAL ... MILITARY ... ORGANIZATIONS".

## Region Home Page

The region home page (Portland’s is on the next page) offers a description of how the system works. From this page, using the icons on the left side, you may view messages already posted (“[View Current Info](#)”), check the weather forecast and road conditions, and Log In to post your own news. There also is a link to an update blog, “[Read about the latest Enhancements](#).”

Note that Portland and Colorado Springs have both a paid, premium-tier membership and a free, basic-tier membership. The basic tier is for very small orgs, businesses and churches. Basic tier information goes only onto media websites, while premium clients’ info goes to newsrooms for on-air use. Premium clients also have access to news release distribution and account customization, among other tools.

# Welcome to FlashAlert Newswire - Portland

## Serving Portland, Salem and SW Washington



[View Current Info](#)



[Portland Forecast](#)



[Road Conditions](#)



[Log In](#)



Tutorials:  
(Update coming soon!)

[Video \(.mp4\)](#)

[Written \(PDF\)](#)

FlashAlert® collects **emergency messages and news releases** from 2,130 schools, colleges, fire and police departments, hospitals, businesses, government offices, utilities and other organizations in Portland/Salem/SW Washington and distributes them to the news media via a continuously updated website and e-mails. It also automatically places emergency information into the websites of participating stations and newspapers and can send it directly to the public.

**FlashAlert Portland has two service tiers available.** Due to the *huge* number of organizations that want to make weather closure announcements, not all organizations can be served with on-air messages. But most can be accommodated through the media's websites. Thus, two tiers – based on organization size and type – are available.

### 1. The free **basic tier is for churches, small schools, preschools and other groups of at least 40 people.**

You may be asked for verification of size, because the media can be overwhelmed with too much info. It is free of charge and puts your emergency information onto the websites of the Portland TV stations and iHeart Media radio stations, but not on air. You may register under four categories: private schools/day cares, churches, businesses, and organizations. You will see your posted information on these sites:

[KATU 2](#)

[KGW 8](#)

[KOIN 6](#)

[KPTV 12](#)

[KEX/KKCW Radio](#)

[Register here for the basic service](#), if you meet the minimum size requirement.

### 2. The **premium tier is for groups that meet the size requirements below, as well as all government offices, police departments, etc.**

Like the basic service, the information you post is placed on TV and radio websites. It also is delivered to **all** newsrooms (TV, radio, daily/weekly newspapers) for on-air use, and TV screen crawls. This service includes access to news release distribution, account customization to reach people other than the media and the optional FlashAlert Messenger system detailed below. Private schools, post-secondary schools and organizations must have at least 125 students/participants, and businesses must have at least 200 employees or daily customer traffic.

[Register here for the premium service](#), if you meet the minimum size requirement.

Please note that to protect your organization from false reports, your account must be authenticated – which may take several hours – so please register in advance of needing the service. No service is available for fewer than 40 people.

### • View Current Info

This link takes you to the report page for your region - the page that the news media monitors - so you can see messages posted by other users. It automatically reloads every 10 minutes, and pops up an alert if it finds new info on a reload, even if the page is minimized. By default, the page sorts by organization category. You can click to view in reverse chronological order to see the latest messages or view by type of messages posted. Note that basic-tier closures are not listed on this page. They can be seen on the media's websites.

### • Weather Forecast/Road Conditions

This takes you to a forecast page for your region. Some regions also have a link to road conditions.

### • Log In

Select this link when you're ready to post an emergency message, a non-urgent news release, or to update your user account info. Can't log in? Use the username/password retrieval tool. You will click on your region, then your category, then your organization. The information will be e-mailed to the addresses in your account: the primary and secondary contacts' office and home email addresses.

**After log in, you have seven actions.**

**1. Add/edit a Closure or Emergency Report**

**2. Add/edit a non-urgent News Release**

**3. List of news media recipients.** This takes you to a list where you can see the actual email addresses that FlashAlert sends to, sorted by cities in your region. Clients are encouraged to review the list and report updates.

**4. View your posted information on FlashAlert.net.** This take you to an HTML page that accumulates all the info you post on the system, to which you may link from your org's home page.

**5. Manage your sub-orgs.** Visible only if you have created sub-orgs.

**6. Emergency Report History.** This allows you to see your emergency messages from the past year. This is helpful if you need third-party proof of a message or what time you posted it. Please note that this is a new database, so it will acquire info as the winter progresses.

**7. Change/customize your account information.**

**Action 1:** Post a Closure or Emergency Report (example on next page)

Here's where you post your emergency messages. You see your organization name (Falcon School District in this example), category ("School Districts"). You may use the drop-down "Quick Report" menus of common (mostly school) messages (preferred), and supplement the menu choice with additional information in the text field below, **OR** enter your own complete message. Keep messages concise and use the spell check feature.

If your message pertains to the next day, check the "For Tomorrow" box. This places a flag after your message, until midnight when flags drop off. In this manner, you do not need to include day/date. If you are updating an earlier message, the Update box automatically checks.

*Late-opening messages delete at 11 am. All-day messages delete by default at 5 pm. If your message pertains to tomorrow, check the box and it will be flagged and not delete at 5 pm.*

If your message is something that you think the media will want to contact you about, include contact information. However, if you are closing for snow along with everyone else, don't worry about contact info - it just makes emails to the media longer.

Select the cities you want your message sent to. Please choose **only** those directly affected, as the media is bombarded with email. Then press "Send."

*• Being concise is important because if your message is too long, the media will shorten it for you. And that may not be a good thing.*

## Closure/Emergency Report:



### To send an emergency message:

Build a message from the "Quick Report" drop down menus (preferred) **AND/OR** type a custom message into the text field.

\* Please read [Guidelines for Posting News on FlashAlert](#) \*

## FlashAlert

Category: Businesses

- This is an Update.** Check if this is an update to a message posted earlier today.
- This is for Tomorrow.** Check to send message now, but mark it for Wed. Aug. 16th instead of today.

### Quick Report for *district-wide* weather emergencies:

Build your message with any or all of these pull-down menus, plus the text field below.

Select Opening Status...

Select Preschool/Kindergarten Status...

Select Transportation Status...

### **AND/OR** type additional **CONCISE** information below.

Please do NOT include info you already chose from the menus above, nor "Due to the inclement weather...".

### Optional Contact Info for News Media: Include phone number and email address; not visible to public.

If the reason for your message is obvious (i.e. snow), no need to include your contact info.

Spell Check

Delete at: Wed. Aug. 16 - 1:00 am

## Select Affected Cities

### Deliver my emergency report to the news media in these cities:

Select **ONLY** the cities that are directly affected.

Cities in **red** have **TV/radio stations**; cities in black are newspaper-only.

#### ▼ Portland/Vanc/Salem:

- Portland TV
- Portland Radio
- Portland Newspapers
- Vancouver, Clark Co

*As much as you can, program your public to know that "closed means closed," and that all activities are canceled, etc. If an event is still on, like a school board meeting, add that to your closure message. For example, "Closed, but school board will meet."*

- Do not start your message with your org name. Your name is the first thing in each message. In your message, please do not direct people to listen to the media for updates, etc. That should be assumed and we don't want every message to have to say that. And we don't run "Open" messages unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as you staying open while all the other districts in your region are late or closed).*

### Information deletes at 5 pm unless you:

**A.** checked the box that your report applies to tomorrow, in which case it is marked For Tomorrow and stays alive past 5 pm. (The “tomorrow” flag drops off at midnight.) Thus, it is not necessary to put a day/date in your message. If it is not marked for tomorrow, it is assumed to be for today. **OR:**

**B.** select a specific delete time, **OR**

**C.** choose a late-start message, which deletes at 11 am.

To send a message to your FlashAlert subscribers and Business Partners but not email the news media, do not checkbox any cities when you send.

### Action 2: Enter/edit a News Release

This link takes you to the news release section for your organization. You’ll find a list of releases you’ve already sent, and a link to add a new one, below.

#### News Release:

**Organization:** (The system will include your organization's name and the date at the top of the release.)

Portland/Vanc/Salem  Businesses   
FlashAlert

**Headline:** (Upper and lower case, system will put headline in caps when sent)

  

**Text/Body:** (blank lines between paragraphs recommended; avoid using special characters)

  

**Contact info for news media only:** (include phone/cell number and email address)

  

#### Pictures & Attachments

**Attachments:** (Optional)  
Select a photo, PDF or other file for distribution to the media. Due to their large bandwidth requirements, please host videos on your server or YouTube and include the link to it in the text field above.

**List of Files to be Uploaded:** (Max 10; remember to use conventional file names, i.e. only letters and numbers)  
Press this button to attach a file:  No file selected.

#### Delivery Options

**Deliver my news release to the news media in these cities:**

Cities in **red** have **TV/radio stations**; cities in black are newspaper-only.

▼ **Portland/Vanc/Salem:**

- Portland TV
- Portland Radin

## Adding a News Release

Type or paste a headline (upper and lower case; the system makes it all caps when it sends it), the text and a contact name, including email address. Select the cities in your region to which you wish your release sent, using the checkboxes at the bottom. *Choose only the cities directly involved.*

Run spell check. Have a preview emailed to your primary or secondary contact or anyone else you choose. Save it as a draft, or schedule it for *future delivery*. You may attach up to 10 photos, sound files, docs, PDFs, etc., and captions.

Click “Send News Release” or “Save Draft.”

FlashAlert sends your news release immediately. It also holds it for one month on an archive that is accessible to you and the media from the region report page.

The e-mails to the media carry contact info; the postings on public websites do not (and neither do Messenger messages to the public), since contact info sometimes contains personal cell numbers.

### Action 3. List of News Media Recipients.

This is where you can view a real-time list of newspapers and stations that get your info, sorted by the city groupings. You can verify who gets info through this list, viewing the actual email addresses, and thereby confirm that your media is covered.

### Action 4. View your posted information on FlashAlert

This is where you can view the page devoted to your organization (example below). It will list emergency messages for that day, followed by your news releases from the past month. This is where you can send employees, reporters, parents, etc., to see your information. They have the option of viewing information posted and, if you have opted to offer the optional service FlashAlert Messenger, can sign up to receive your news or manage their existing subscription. You can link to this page from your own web site.

**Aug 3rd**  
05:34pm  
This is a test, please ignore  
Report: #47842  
EXPIRED - 2017-08-03 18:00:00  
Posted from: 50.106.52.110  
Sent to 4 subscribers.

**Jul 26th**  
08:09pm -  
08:46pm  
This is a test, please ignore  
Report: #47818  
DELETED  
Posted from: 50.53.173.52  
Sent to 2 subscribers.

**Jul 24th**  
10:39am  
Evening activities canceled  
Report: #47812  
EXPIRED - 2017-07-24 11:00:00  
Posted from: 50.53.173.52  
Sent to 2 subscribers.

### Action 5. Emergency Report History (at left)

FA has added a new database that tracks your emergency messages. This information will be available to you at the end of each winter season.

### Action 6. Change your account information.

Choose “Change/ Customize Your Account Information.” This screen (at right) allows you to define the category and name of your organization as it will appear and choose a short username and a password. You will choose a home region. Should you have a need to send your messages to the media in other regions, contact FlashAlert to be granted access to those regions.

Another field allows you to enter the address of your org's home page. This turns the name of your org, wherever it shows up, into a link to your org's home page, making it easier for the media and the public to learn more about you.

If you are using the Messenger self-subscription option, you can see how many people are registered to get your news at the same time as the news media. Orgs that use FlashAlert specify whether they use FA for news releases or not, so the public isn't signing up for something they won't get.

Messenger is included in memberships through Puget Sound ESD and NWRESA. Otherwise, the cost is 20 cents per subscriber for the first 1,000, then 10 cents each thereafter. There is no cost to the public subscriber.

### Messenger Settings

**Activate FlashAlert Messenger:**  
Allow the public to self register to receive your messages as emails or phone app push notifications?  
 Yes  No

In addition to emergencies, enable your Messenger subscribers to receive your **news releases**?  
 Yes  No

**Restricted User Registration:**  
Enter your district/company/org's email suffix (i.e. @flashalert.net, @hp.com, @katu.com) to only allow Messenger subscribers with an email address with that suffix to subscribe. Leave blank to allow anyone to subscribe.

Changing this does not remove currently active subscriptions.

**Subscribers:** You currently have **1** subscriber with **10** phone/tablet apps installed.  
 Disable New Subscribers

On the Messenger subscription page (for the public):

[My Email Address \(2\)](#) | [My Linked Phone Apps \(10\)](#) | [My Subscriptions \(2\)](#) | [Add Subscription](#) | [Account Settings](#)

Primary Email:	<input type="text" value="craig@flashalert.net"/>	<a href="#">UPDATE</a>	<a href="#">SEND TEST</a>
Email #2	<input type="text" value="360513XXXX@vtext.com"/>	<a href="#">UPDATE</a>	<a href="#">SEND TEST</a>   <a href="#">DELETE</a>
Email #3	<input type="text"/>	<a href="#">ADD</a>	

[My Email Address \(2\)](#) | [My Linked Phone Apps \(10\)](#) | [My Subscriptions \(2\)](#) | [Add Subscription](#) | [Account Settings](#)

Your iOS and Android devices that have the FlashAlert Messenger app linked to this account:

Platform	Device Name		Phone OS Version
iPad	Home iPad	<a href="#">SEND TEST</a>	8.3
iPad	Craig Walker's iPad	<a href="#">SEND TEST</a>	9.3.4
iPad	iPad Mini	<a href="#">SEND TEST</a>	10.1

[My Email Address \(2\)](#) | [My Linked Phone Apps \(10\)](#) | [My Subscriptions \(2\)](#) | [Add Subscription](#) | [Account Settings](#)

Organizations that you are subscribed to:



Emergency Alerts

News Releases

Each summer, subscribers must respond to an email for their account to stay active and they go through a validation process for all new email addresses and text addresses.

You can create sub-orgs of Messenger users. This may be a special list for employees or customers. And now, you can restrict Messenger subscriptions to those with a certain email suffix.

## **Facebook and Twitter**

In order to make FlashAlert as comprehensive as possible, you can have it pass along your emergency messages and news releases to your Facebook and/or Twitter pages. Should you not want this to happen, you still can enter the address so that your links appear on your org's FA page.

Enter information about one or two main users of the system. These are the people who will be e-mailed -- at home and work -- with your username and password if they forget it and trigger the retrieval tool on the login page. This does not limit you to just two users - as many can use the system as you give your username and password to. Cell phone numbers allow us to reach you if there are questions about your message. (All information remains confidential.) The primary and secondary users are emailed copies for their records of all news item you post and the office email address of the primary user will be the "reply-to" address used in emails to the media.

Organizations should choose their default delivery cities. These should be your basic coverage area, and can be modified on a per-message basis.

Near the bottom of the User Account page is a "Business Partner" section. Here, you may enter the email addresses of organizations/people to whom you wish your messages delivered in addition to the news media. For example, a school district might want to have a food vendor notified of closures or late openings. Or have their board members be sent news releases, before they see them in the paper. A police agency may wish to share both types of messages with other police agencies. A new feature allows you to create multiple Business Partner lists. Business Partners doesn't appear when you first sign up. You can access it after your account is activated.

## **Try It Out!**

If you'd like to try posting a message and see what it looks like, from your region's home page, go to "Try It" toward the bottom of the page and click for the "dummy" zone. Click on the "Post a Test Message" button in the left frame. Use the username "Test" and password "Test." Post a message, then go back to "View Current Info" to see how it looks.

## **Odds and Ends**

Keep messages short and simple. Know that what you type will be visible on public web sites, so think about spelling and grammar. What's the difference between an emergency message and a news release? Emergency messages are those that need to go on the air immediately. News releases do not need such immediate attention.

You should have a backup plan. In the event that you cannot get onto the Internet due to a power failure or have a problem with your Internet service provider, have at least one person in your organization whom you can call and have post your message. Likewise, since the Internet is an



unregulated medium, it is advisable to maintain a list of phone numbers for the news media in the event of some other type of failure.

And if the FlashAlert server should experience a problem, you can go to [www.FlashAlertBackup.net](http://www.FlashAlertBackup.net), hosted at a different ISP, to access a group email window to reach major stations.

## **Register**

Register on your region's home page. In order to prevent unauthorized people from registering, your account will be activated after it has been authenticated. The FlashAlert billing cycle runs from September to August. Invoices go out in August. Subscriptions are pro-rated starting January 1.