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Communicating Emergency Information to the Public

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celebrating one billion connected people worldwide

- Emergency communications are a last resort. Disaster *prevention and minimisation* are the best strategies;

- In cases where they *are* nonetheless necessary, emergency communications should be considered in the largest sense possible: radio stations, television channels, Internet sites, e-mail accounts, mobile telephones, and even more traditional tools such as public sirens;

- Mobile telephones are thus only part of the solution. All the above media are necessary and complementary. It would be a mistake for national authorities to engage only with mobile operators:
  - networks can be damaged or saturated;
  - mobile penetration can be low;
  - literacy rates can be low;
  - message credibility can be doubted.

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1/ Mandate or encourage?   2/ SMS or Cell Broadcast?

Whatever the answers, basic issues must be a national choice

Country	Participation	Instrument	Technology
Italy (2004)	Encouraged	Contractual agreement	SMS
Netherlands (2005)	Encouraged	Contractual agreement	Cell Broadcast
Finland (2006)	Mandated	Legislation	Decision left to each operator

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- **Italy**
- voluntary SMS system (September 2004)
- 3, TIM, Vodafone, Wind + Council of Ministers
- Currently being renegotiated

- **Used several times**
- tsunami
- papal funeral

- **Netherlands**

  - voluntary cell-broadcast system (May 2005)

  - KPN, Vodafone, Telfort + Ministry of Economic Affairs

- **Operational but not yet used**

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- **Finland**
  - mandated system (2006) but one which allows operator to choose technology

- **Neutral approach**
  - recognises that both technologies have strengths
  - recognises that better technologies may emerge
  - recognises that operators are best placed to know which technology will be the most effective

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- Mobile operators distinguish two types of emergency communications:
  - emergency alerting : e.g. "Tsunami risk: please leave beach calmly"
  - emergency handling : e.g. "Potable water available at town hall"

- Emergency alerting raises special concerns:
  - risk of causing panic;
  - risk of creating curiosity;
  - timing very important.

- Emergency alerting and emergency handling share common concerns:
  - spam/hoaxes;
  - message fatigue;
  - network overload;
  - cost.

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- Spam / hoaxes / message fatigue:
  - help mobile operators to fight spam e.g. by maintaining 'calling party pays';
  - ensure a single, authoritative source for emergency messages.

- Network overload:
  - ensure mobile operators have sufficient frequency bandwidth;
  - allow derogations in voice quality during emergencies.

- Cost:
  - consider options to alleviate the impact of costs, including:
    - government payment for carrying messages;
    - tax reductions corresponding to the value of the messages sent;
    - funding through an existing universal access fund ;
    - ability to charge subscribers for emergency messages.

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