

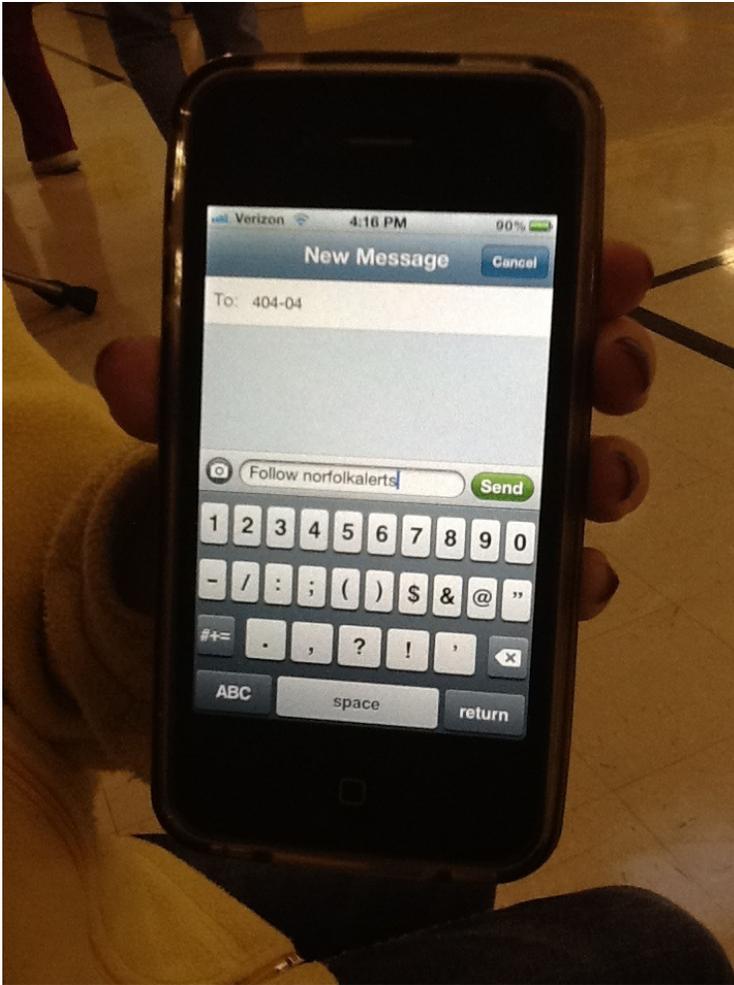
Norfolk Insider

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“Emergency Text Notifications from the City”



The snow may be coming down fast and accumulating. For those citizens in Norfolk who want to know if a snow emergency has been called by city officials, they are now able to sign up for the Norfolk Emergency Alert Messaging System.

This system will send text messages of emergency alerts to cell phones of subscribers to the system. Not only snow emergencies but all information considered urgent will be transmitted via text messages. Only emergencies will be communicated on this system.

To subscribe to the emergency system, a person will need to use a phone capable of sending and receiving text messages. From that phone they would then send a text message containing the words “follow norfolkalerts” to the phone number “40404”.

According to Jim McKenzie, Information Systems Manager for the City of Norfolk, people may find it strange to send a text message to a five digit number. “Note that although it’s not a full ten digit number, it is the correct way to sign up for the emergency alert messages,” McKenzie said.

Within a few minutes after sending the text message, the sender will receive a confirmation

message that reads, “You’re now following @norfolkalerts” which confirms that they are signed up to receive the Norfolk emergency alert messages.

“You may receive one or two additional informational messages at sign up time which you can ignore. You will also receive the last emergency message the City has posted,” McKenzie said.

He added that there is no certain time of the day when messages will be broadcast and that people can discontinue the emergency alert system messages to their phone if they would like.

To discontinue the service, a person would need to send a text message containing the two words “unfollow norfolkalerts” (with a space between) to the phone number 40404. Within a few minutes after they send the text

message, they will get a confirmation message saying “You are no longer following @norfolkalerts”. This message confirms that they are unsubscribed to Norfolk emergency alert messages.

McKenzie said there is no charge to receive emergency alert messages from the City of Norfolk; however normal text messaging charges from the wireless phone carrier may apply.

“Messages delivered through the Norfolk Emergency Alert Messaging System are intended to be a best effort communication and are just one component of many methods of emergency communications. Citizens are also encouraged to listen to radio and television to be aware of emergency situations,” McKenzie said.

He added that text messages may be delayed or not received during regional emergencies, periods of high messaging traffic, or due to technical problems.

“More and more citizens today communicate and receive communications via text messages. The City is adding this service to keep pace with how citizens utilize communications technology,” McKenzie said.

For information about the Norfolk emergency alert messages, go to <http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/EmergencyAlerts.htm>.