

Communicating During an Emergency

In an emergency, reliable communication is critical for schools, businesses, and organizations to coordinate with staff, authorities, and emergency responders. Since cell towers and landlines can become overloaded during high call volumes, having alternative communication methods is essential. Below are different options, along with key considerations and safety tips.

Two-Way Radios (Walkie-Talkies)

Best for: Short-distance communication among staff during crisis response.

- **Pros:** Instant communication, no reliance on cellular networks, easy to use.
- **Cons:** Limited range (can be extended with a repeater).
- **Safety Tips:**
 - Train staff on proper use before an emergency.
 - Test coverage across your entire facility to ensure no dead zones.
 - Keep extra batteries or portable chargers on hand.

CB (Citizen Band) Radios

Best for: Medium-range communication with a small group.

- **Pros:** More powerful than basic two-way radios, reliable, and fairly private.
- **Cons:** Cannot access emergency channels or directly contact authorities. Requires more power.
- **Safety Tips:**
 - Bring a solar charger or backup power source in case of outages.
 - Establish clear communication protocols with your team.

Ham (Amateur) Radios

Best for: Long-distance communication (up to 20+ miles, extendable with repeaters).

- **Pros:** Highly reliable, long-range, and supported by a network of volunteer operators.
- **Cons:** Requires an FCC license to operate legally.
- **Safety Tips:**
 - Take an online course and obtain a license before an emergency.
 - Connect with local ham radio clubs for support during disasters.

Satellite Phones

Best for: Global communication when cell service is unavailable.

- **Pros:** Works in remote areas, unaffected by local infrastructure failures.
- **Cons:** Expensive, requires clear line-of-sight to the sky.
- **Safety Tips:**
 - Keep the phone charged and store it in a protective case.
 - Have a backup power source (solar charger or extra battery).

