

ALERT NOW FAQs

Here are some AlertNow facts. Families, please remember to keep your phone numbers updated with the school office. Please make sure that we have your preferred number for normal announcements. In emergency situations all phone numbers you list on school information cards will receive our call. Staff should keep their number updated with Lyn at Central Office. Staff can have only one phone number entered into the system.

How does AlertNow distinguish a live person from an answering machine?

AlertNow utilizes Advanced Answering Machine Detection (AAMD) software. The system starts the broadcast immediately upon telephone pickup; simultaneously, it is listening for interruptions. If the system is not interrupted by noise or someone speaking within the first 3.5 seconds, the message is delivered in its entirety. If the system detects a greeting longer than a few seconds, the system treats this as an outgoing message from an answering machine and will wait for a pause (usually after the beep) before delivering the message to be recorded.

I said "hello" and no message played. OR The message started, but then stopped. What happened?

The AlertNow system plays the message as soon as the phone is picked up. However, errors can occur if the person repeatedly says "hello" or answers in a noisy environment (i.e. traffic, children playing, loud music or television, dog barking, etc.). Generally, if a person offers an extended greeting such that it overlaps the AlertNow message, the system pauses, waits for silence, and replays the message from the beginning. With background noise, it is possible that the system was unable to detect the end of the "greeting" and thus the message stopped. In a noisy environment, where silence is unattainable, **call recipients can press 1 on their phone keypad, and the message will play from the beginning without interruption.** Note that pressing 1 to override the AAMD software does not work for TTS (text-to-speech) messages.

What if the line is busy or there is no answer?

AlertNow will make up to four attempts to reach each number, with three minutes in between each call (depending on account settings). If the message is not delivered by the fourth attempt, it will show on the broadcast report as busy, disconnected, or no answer.

Why is my answering machine recording only half of the message?

If the answering machine greeting does not initiate soon enough or is too quiet, the system may read this as a live person and begin playing the message, even though the machine has yet to start recording. This will result in a recording of silence (if the AlertNow message finishes playing before the machine begins recording) or of just the last portion of the AlertNow message. The recommended solution is to have parents re-record their outgoing message in a loud, clear voice so that there are no pauses. Alternately, if the answering machine is set to record for a specific amount of time (e.g. 30 seconds) and the AlertNow message runs longer than that, this will also result in message cut-off.

My caller ID showed that the school had called but there was no voicemail. Why?

It could be due to the number of rings before pickup. AlertNow is set to ring a line six times. If an answering machine is set to pick up on seven or more rings, the message may not be delivered to that machine. Keep in mind that for systems where it is necessary to enter a mailbox number, AlertNow is unable to leave a message.

Why doesn't the school's name appear on the caller ID?

AlertNow passes the caller ID information to the local telephone carriers, but it is up to those carriers to pass it along to their customers. Furthermore, different local telephone companies process caller ID information differently. Some provide the name associated with the number, while others do not. For example, a telephone company may require an individual to subscribe to "Advanced Caller ID" in order to receive the school name along with the phone number. If the call comes goes out as an emergency call the number will appear as 411-000-0000.

I have a telemarketer screening device/service. How will that affect the call?

If a contact has a device or service on their telephone line (e.g. TeleZapper, Privacy Manager, Privacy Director, etc.) designed to prevent automated phone systems from connecting, they may not receive an AlertNow call. For example, with Privacy Director all unidentifiable incoming calls are rerouted and the callers must identify themselves for the call to go through. Because our system is automated, it will not identify itself; thus the call will not get through to the recipient. For screening systems that are dependent on Caller ID's, recipients can authorize access for their school's phone number through their device. Note that calls identified with the school's number on the Caller ID generally have no trouble getting through Privacy Manager type systems. Only calls with the emergency Caller ID of 411 tend to get caught up in Privacy Manager's net.