

Reference: 01774489

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

4 March 2024

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about emergency broadcasting. We have interpreted your request to mean the Government's Emergency Alert System.

We received this request on 5 February 2024 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

What criteria are used to determine when an emergency broadcast is necessary?

Who is responsible for making the decision to issue an emergency broadcast?

What steps are taken to ensure that emergency broadcasts are accurate and timely?

How are emergency broadcasts distributed to the public?

Our response

You may find it helpful to know that His Majesty's Government are responsible for the Emergency Alert System, and you may wish to contact the Cabinet Office to request this information. Information relating to Emergency Alerts is also publicly available on the Government's website <https://www.gov.uk/alerts>.

Notwithstanding the above, we have searched for the information you have requested. While we can confirm that we do hold some information in scope of your request, we consider it is exempt from disclosure under section 24(1) of the FOI Act. S24(1) provides that information is exempt from disclosure where exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information. The attached **Annex A** to this letter sets out the exemption in full, as well as the factors Ofcom considered when deciding where the public interest lay.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress.

Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).

<p>Section 24: Safeguarding National Security</p> <p>s24(1) provides that information is exempt from disclosure where exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security.</p> <p>The application of s24 is subject to a public interest balance.</p>	
<p>Factors for disclosure</p>	<p>Factors for withholding</p>
<p>Transparency: There is always a general public interest in transparency, and a specific interest in understanding the Government’s arrangements for making these forms of important announcements.</p>	<p>Disclosure of the information would raise significant concerns on national security grounds and would adversely affect national security.</p> <p>Publishing this type of information could be of interest from an espionage, sabotage or disruption perspective i.e., to those wishing to disrupt or interfere with the operation of what is an important part of the UK’s emergency preparedness.</p>
<p>Reasons why public interest favours withholding information</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The greater likelihood of the adverse effect, the greater the public interest in maintaining the exemption. This is affected by how extensive the adverse effect is – in this case the adverse effect on national security has the potential to affect the security of the United Kingdom and its people, and the opportunity for the adverse effect to arise is ongoing. • The impact of the adverse effect on national security also has the potential to harm the United Kingdom and its people and is therefore severe. • Ofcom is not responsible for the system or its operation and such information can be requested from Her Majesty’s Government. • Information relating to Emergency Alerts is publicly available on the Government’s website https://www.gov.uk/alerts 	