OFFLINE RESILIENCE GUIDE // UK EDITION

Emergency Communications for UK Households

Keep more than one way to receive information and contact people. This guide covers paper contacts, radio, mobile limitations and legal PMR446 handhelds.

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LAYER 1 // ACT

FIRST ACTIONS

Start here. Then read the conditions and exceptions below.

1. Write key numbers and meeting points on paper.
2. Keep a battery or wind-up broadcast radio as a backup receive path.
3. UK Emergency Alerts work on compatible devices using 4G and 5G networks.
4. PMR446 handheld radios can be used licence-exempt when the equipment meets UK requirements.
5. PMR446 is short-range local communication, not a replacement for the emergency services.

> **IMPORTANT**
> This is practical preparedness information, not emergency instruction. During an incident, follow current advice from emergency services, your utility provider and relevant public authorities.

Communication has two jobs

You need to receive trustworthy information and you need a way to coordinate with people nearby. Those are different jobs. Broadcast radio is useful for receiving updates. A phone is useful while networks are working. PMR446 handhelds can provide short-range local voice between members of a household or group.

Do not build the plan around one device. Electricity loss can take out your router, some modern landline setups and, in some places, local mobile coverage.

Paper is still part of the system

Write down 105, family phone numbers, a meeting point, medication information and useful radio frequencies. Government preparedness guidance specifically recommends keeping important numbers on paper where they can be found during a power cut.

Agree in advance what family members should do if messages are delayed. A simple meeting point and a named person outside the immediate area can remove a lot of uncertainty.

Know what UK Emergency Alerts can and cannot do

UK Emergency Alerts are free and do not require an app or sign-up. GOV.UK says compatible devices receive them via 4G and 5G mobile networks based on the area around the device. The phone does not need mobile data or Wi-Fi enabled.

A device that is off, on a 2G or 3G network, Wi-Fi only or incompatible will not receive an alert. That is another reason not to treat one phone as the entire warning system.

Use compliant PMR446 equipment

Ofcom describes PMR446 as a licence-exempt option for compliant handheld radios operating from 446.0 to 446.2 MHz, with maximum ERP of 0.5 watts. The important word is compliant. Do not assume every imported handheld advertised online is legal to use licence-free on PMR446 in the UK.

Range claims on packaging are usually best-case figures. Buildings, terrain and interference reduce range. Think of PMR446 as local coordination around a neighbourhood, property, campsite or group, not long-distance communications.

Practise before you need it

Put batteries in the radio, tune the broadcast stations you actually use and test the handhelds around your normal area. Decide on a channel for your group and keep the instructions with the radios. Equipment that has never been switched on is not yet part of a plan.

Useful kit for this plan

Equipment should support the plan, not replace it. The commercial catalogue is kept on a separate page.

KIT IS KEPT SEPARATE
Named products and Amazon UK affiliate links are kept on the dedicated KIT page so this guide remains editorial. Use the kit only after the plan identifies a genuine equipment gap.

OPEN KIT →

Sources checked for this guide

We use public sources for the factual backbone and write the guide in our own words. Source pages can change, so the links below are the place to check current official advice.

PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE

UK Government Prepare: Power cuts

Practical actions before and during a power cut, including 105 and communications planning.

https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/be-informed-about-hazards/power-cuts/

PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE

Ofcom: Business Radio Guidance 2025

PMR446 licence-exempt operation, frequencies and maximum ERP.

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/spectrum/business-radio-licences/business-radio-guidance-document.pdf?v=408873

PRIMARY / AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE

GOV.UK: How Emergency Alerts work

How UK Emergency Alerts reach compatible devices and when they may not arrive.

https://www.gov.uk/alerts/how-alerts-work

Editorial review date: 25 September 2026. If an official source conflicts with this page, follow the official source.

INFORMATION CHECK✓ CURRENT REVIEW

REVIEWED	NEXT REVIEW DUE	OFFICIAL REFERENCES
25 Sep 2026	23 Jan 2027	3 primary sources

If an official source conflicts with this guide, follow the current official source.

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Source page: https://getpreppednow.co.uk/guides/emergency-communications-pmr446.html
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