

FCC mulls nationwide mobile device alerts

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- A nationwide emergency alert system using cell phones and mobile devices texting in case of a crisis is in the works, U.S. federal regulators say. The Federal Communications Commission plans to establish technical standards and other requirements that would make possible communication of emergency situations by texting to mobile devices, USA Today reported. While wireless carriers would not be required to upgrade their networks to accommodate the alerts, those agreeing to participate in the program would have to implement FCC standards, two sources familiar with the proposal told the newspaper. The network is expected to be operational by 2010. The four major cell phone providers -- AT&T, Sprint Nextel, T-Mobile and Verizon -- said they would participate if the FCC adopts an advisory committee's recommendations on how the system works. The FCC is expected to approve the recommendations, which include, initially, limiting warnings to English and 90 characters in length, officials said. "We look forward to offering mobile emergency alerts to our customers," said Jim Bugel, assistant vice president of federal affairs for AT&T.

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