

Position Paper Cell Broadcast as a tool for civil alert

Authors

Partner and Participating countries of the EU project “Cell Broadcast for public warning - Sharing knowledge and experiences and identification and standardisation of (technical) requirements”, referred to throughout as the ‘supporting governments’.

This project is funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security and initiated by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands. The United Kingdom, Poland, Hungary, Germany and Sweden are partners in the project.

DISCLAIMER

Support of this position paper does not imply that a country has taken or will take a firm decision to implement Cell Broadcast for civil alert.

Purpose of this paper

To describe the common position of the supporting governments towards the possible use of cell broadcast for civil alert applications. The paper aims to provide direction for the mobile telecommunications (standardisation) industry and the European Commission.

Target audience

Mobile telecommunications standardisation bodies working on (handset) standards
Mobile handset vendors and manufacturers
Mobile network providers and operators
The European Commission

Version control:

Version 5 includes comments from the attendants of the workshops on User Interface organized in London (UK) on the 16th and 17th of December 2008, Procurement organized in Amsterdam (NL) on 28th and 29th of January 2009 and Best Practices in Warsaw (PL), 4th and 5th of March 2009.

This paper is not a static document, but will be adjusted according to new insights and agreements.



Position Paper Cell Broadcast as a tool for civil alert

Introductory Note

This position paper is a product of the EU project “Cell Broadcast for public warning - Sharing knowledge and experiences and identification and standardisation of (technical) requirements,” funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security. The aim of the project is to share knowledge on the use of Cell Broadcast as a tool for civil alert, compile functional requirements and explore the possibility of cross border trials. The paper aims to provide direction for the mobile telecommunications (standardisation) industry and the European Commission.

Background

- The supporting governments have many tools available to alert their citizens in case of disasters, risks and crises.
- These tools vary from sirens, radio/television, dedicated telecommunications infrastructures and cars with megaphones.
- These tools are no longer fully sufficient for various reasons, like:
 - o An increased awareness of risks in societies.
 - o Citizens expect their national government to provide them services at levels they receive from commercial service providers and expect them to use modern and readily available tools, like the internet and mobile phones.
 - o The general strategy in case of crisis is to maximise the level of self-support of citizens. This requires the provision of a service to alert **and instruct** which is not effectively supported by existing tools.
 - o The consequences of globalisation make it necessary to look for uniform methods of communication to the public, on a European level.
- There are various reasons to look into cell broadcast as a tool for civil alert. These reasons include:
 - o A **specific capability gap** that currently exists, for example a need to transmit messages in different languages concurrently
 - o A desire to **exploit the opportunity** that recent technological developments present to enhance capability, for example increased usage of mobile phones enables the development of more effective and efficient warning methods
 - o The **financial incentives** – a cell broadcasting service may be cheaper to maintain, for example in comparison with the maintenance of a national siren system, and therefore a good addition to the existing alerting tools. Furthermore, Cell Broadcast can fulfil a certain requirement, which existing tools cannot in terms of mass warning, informing and alerting.
 - o The introduction of Cell Broadcasting has strong **political support** - ministers are committed to using technology to improve the efficiency, choice, and personalisation of public services
 - o As all warning methods are vulnerable to disruption, an ‘extra tool in the toolkit’ would **increase the overall resilience** of the warning and informing capability of the supporting governments.

Cell Broadcast as a tool for civil alert

- Cell Broadcast has the potential to be an additional tool in the current set of tools to alert citizens.
- The main role of Cell Broadcast is to distribute an initial alert and instructions. Other tools, like radio/television or internet, could follow this.
- It works via mobile phones, which the vast majority of citizens are carrying.
- It has the ability to alert and instruct everyone in a country or smaller groups, based on their geographical location, within minutes.
- Alternatives to Cell Broadcast do exist, however at present the supporting governments have not identified any that match the capabilities of cell broadcast.



The main issues to be resolved

- Cell Broadcast as a standardised tool for warning in Europe would help warn visitors in a country, tourists and guest workers. The mobility of people in Europe is high, especially during holiday periods. Therefore, agreement is required on the use of different languages and the possibility of one standardised alert tone in EU member states.
- Although Cell Broadcast is an old standard, the supporting governments may be the first users of Cell Broadcast as a mass application in Europe. Co-operation is therefore needed to maximise learning.
- Mobile network operators, many of which operate in more than one EU country, have to support this initiative.
- In order to make a cell broadcast alert service as accessible and user-friendly as possible for citizens, work on the handset support for Cell Broadcast is required. Since the handset industry is a global industry, this needs to be addressed on an EU level.
- Due to the limited use of Cell Broadcast in GSM, the support for Cell Broadcast on UMTS networks and handsets is low on the agenda of the industry. Co-operation is required to get this on the agenda of the industry, for UMTS and next generation technologies.

EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES

What the supporting governments want to be able to offer their citizens

- Alert messages broadcast over a specific geographic area.
- A seamless service, even when travelling.
- Handsets which support at least the following Cell Broadcast features for civil alert:
 - o Receive alert messages accompanied by a special ring tone, preferably an EU standardised ring tone;
 - o Various alert levels, e.g. local, regional and national level;
 - o sending out emergency messages to users, preferably in their own language, but when not practicable, then in the language of the message originator;
 - o Alert messages received are displayed immediately on the handset display, even during a voice call;
 - o Ability to store messages;
 - o A simple user interface that enables the user to switch the alert service on or off.
- The possibility to send a message accompanied by an 'all clear' tone, to inform citizens that the crisis has ended, is a topic for further study.
- The possibility to make use of pictograms in cell broadcast messages to inform citizens on the type of crisis and possibly on the type of action that is required, is a topic for further study.

Support required from the European Commission

Next to the generous support received from the DG JLS for the European project on Cell Broadcast and the contacts with the MIC of DG Environment and the DG Communication, the supporting governments require the following:

- Support towards standardisation bodies to standardise a set of requirements for a civil alert service via Cell Broadcast.
- Support towards the mobile infrastructure and equipment vendors to implement the requirements.
- Support towards the European mobile telecommunications service providers to support Cell Broadcast initiatives against reasonable conditions.
- Support towards the standardisation of one EU ring tone.

Support required from the mobile telecommunications industry

- **Handset Vendors** to implement the standards for civil alert

