

# Push-to-Talk App Emergency Communication Apps

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[safetymanagement.eku.edu/blog/push-to-talk-app-emergency-communication-apps](https://safetymanagement.eku.edu/blog/push-to-talk-app-emergency-communication-apps)

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During or after an emergency, communicating might be difficult because electricity, cell service, and internet might be out or reduced. Gathering and connecting to emergency resources could be impossible with the services many people regularly use.

Several emergency mobile apps claim to work with reduced or no internet or cellular data. They have many features as well as limitations.

During or just after Hurricane Irma moved through Florida in September 2017, more than 27 percent of all cellular towers were out around the state, according to the report “Communications Status Report for Areas Impacted by Hurricane Irma.” Some counties had more than half of their cellular towers out of service. The same report said more than 7.5 million cable or wireline subscribers were out of service during or after the storm, which includes people who receive internet service from cable or wireline.

Effective, predictable communication is crucial to any sort of disaster response. An online emergency management degree can offer emergency managers and directors the knowledge and skills necessary to plan for catastrophic events and ensure that their teams stay in contact when dealing with crises or life-threatening situations.

## Finding Communication Apps

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Besides the phone and SMS messaging on smartphones, a variety of apps can provide ways to communicate. Some apps claim they can turn a phone into a walkie-talkie using push-to-talk technology, or PPT.

The article “How to Recognize a Professional Push-to-Talk Application” lists several items to look for when trying to find a PPT application:

- Does it make an instant connection? Cutting off the first part of a message can range from annoying to dangerous – think about the difference between *go* and *don't go*.
- Can users talk without needing to keep a talk button pressed?
- While other people are talking, does it hold a place in the queue for a person to speak?
- Can it initiate a conversation with one person while talking to the group without closing the app?
- Can it make an emergency call?
- Is there a way to text or send messages?
- Does the app use the device's location?

## Benefits of PPT Apps

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According to the article “Best Walkie-Talkie Apps for Android and iPhone,”

a good PPT app has several benefits over traditional phone and messaging apps, including:

- Instant connectivity: No need to dial a number and wait for the other party to respond.
- Group communications: An easy way to get information out to several people in real time without wasting time calling or typing.
- Affordability: Many PPT apps are free or cheap.

## PPT App Limitations

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Most of the common PPT apps require Wi-Fi or a cellular data signal in order to work. Just a few can operate with peer-to-peer Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, however the people communicating need to be in very close proximity to each other.

The article “Emergency Apps You Can Use Without Wi-Fi During A Disaster” discusses two kinds of technology that allow some apps to work without Wi-Fi or cellular data. Serval technology began in Australia and can create a direct connection on Android devices. MeshKit connects some phones to each other. Apps using both kinds of connectivity are limited.

For most apps to work, everyone wishing to communicate with each other must install the app and either create or join a group. Much of what people say is public, so not much is private.

The article “Best Walkie-Talkie Apps for Android And iPhone” says no app can perform the same as a walkie-talkie because transmission time can be inconsistent. Most also require some kind of connection such as Wi-Fi or cellular data.

Courses in emergency management, including online emergency management degree programs, can help managers and leaders understand the intricacies of disaster communications and find the tools that work best for their situations.

## About Eastern Kentucky University’s Online Master of Science in Safety, Security and Emergency Management Program

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Students enrolled in EKU’s online emergency management degree program can learn the essential components of safety, security and emergency management. The program allows students to customize their experience through a Multidisciplinary Track or concentrations in Corporate Security Operations, Occupational Safety, or Emergency Management and Disaster Resilience. The concentrations are also available as stand-alone graduate certificates, independent of a master’s degree.

EKU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Colleges. For more information, contact Eastern Kentucky University now.

## Recommended Reading

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Emergency Planning & Preparedness for Today’s Workplace

4 Ways Big Data is Revolutionizing Emergency Management

5 Questions to Ask About Your Emergency Action Plan

## Sources

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How To Recognize A Professional Push-To-Talk Application: AIRBUS

Emergency Apps You Can Use Without Wi-Fi During A Disaster: Bustle

Best Walkie-Talkie Apps For Android And iPhone: Walkie-Talkie Central

Communications Status Report for Areas Impacted by Hurricane Irma

Federal Communications Commission: FEMA

