

Frequently Asked Questions

What YOU should know about CodeRED® Emergency Notification System

Question: What is CodeRED® and why is it important to me?

Answer: CodeRED® is a new City of Punta Gorda service by which City officials can notify City residents and businesses by telephone about emergency situations or critical community alerts. The system is capable of sending messages only to people affected by a particular situation, or, in the case of a widespread emergency like a hurricane, to the City's entire population.

The speed of the CodeRED® system (up to 60,000 calls per hour) is so great that the City is able to send a message to affected households almost as quickly as City officials become aware of the situation.

Question: Does this mean the City will be calling me constantly?

Answer: No. The City of Punta Gorda respects your privacy. CodeRED® will be used only when situations arise that you should know about.

The system will be used to send messages only to those residents who are directly affected by a particular event. CodeRED® will call only you and your neighbors to deliver that very important health advisory.

If there is a City or region-wide emergency such as a hurricane, all Punta Gorda residents will be called and kept up to date on developments.

Question: For what kinds of situations will CodeRED® be used?

Answer: Hurricanes and other types of severe weather, wildfires, search and rescue alerts concerning a missing child or adult, law enforcement emergencies, sexual offender/predator alerts, hazardous material spills are examples of the types of situations that residents/businesses can be notified of.

Question: Why do I need CodeRED® when I have radio and TV to keep me informed?

Answer: CodeRED® is an additional measure of safety the Punta Gorda City Council and City staff believe all of our residents need and deserve. If power goes out, you may not be able to depend upon radio and TV. However, because telephone lines are self-powered, the City can continue to keep you informed through messages delivered by CodeRED®.

Even if you have power, CodeRED® will probably be able to reach you with important information faster than TV and radio stations can put it on the air. That's because CodeRED® is a *direct connection between you and the City of Punta Gorda.*

And unlike hurricanes, many emergencies occur without advance warning. In such cases, you may have no reason to turn on a TV or radio. That's when CodeRED®

can help City officials alert you immediately and advise you to take appropriate action.

Question: I have a cordless phone, and it does not work when the power goes out. How is the City going to be able to contact me?

Answer: There are two ways you can continue to receive telephone messages from the City through CodeRED®:

1. Make sure you have at least one working corded telephone and ensure the ringer is turned on.
2. The CodeRED® “Residential Data Collection” sign-up form gives you the option of filling in both a **Primary Phone number** and an alternate phone number. You can fill in the **Alternate Phone number** blank with your cell telephone number, or you can make it your Primary Phone number if you wish. Entering an alternate phone number will cause *BOTH* your primary and alternate phone numbers to be called.

Of course, no form of communication is guaranteed to remain in operation under severe conditions such as those produced by a powerful hurricane or a wildfire. CodeRED® *does* widen the safety margin by offering City residents another new and powerful means of learning about vital, timely information.

Question: Will CodeRED® leave a message on a machine?

Answer: Yes. CodeRED® will leave a message on a machine or on voice mail. Depending on the time of day, calls may go to answering machines. Part of the CodeRED® solution is the patented ability to recognize answering devices and leave the message completely in one pass.

Question: What happens if the line is busy?

Answer: If the line is busy, CodeRED® tries it again after cycling through the calls. Until it delivers a message to either a person or answering device it will try three times with the exception of a 'no answer' which it tries once.

Question: Do I have to pay extra for CodeRED® service?

Answer: No. CodeRED® is entirely paid for by the City of Punta Gorda.

Question: Does the City have my telephone number, or do I have to sign up to receive CodeRED® emergency calls?

Answer: We strongly encourage you to sign up for CodeRED®. After all, you are the most reliable source of information about how to reach your household by phone.

Because the City of Punta Gorda wants to reach everyone affected by an emergency whether or not they have signed up for CodeRED®, two telephone number databases are already available to the system. One is the Utility Billing database for all City utility services; the other is a database prepared by Emergency Communications Network, the company that supplies CodeRED® service to the City. Both databases are updated regularly.

If you have moved or changed your telephone number recently, you should definitely sign up for CodeRED® service or update information you have already provided. Any new information you supply will automatically replace old information.

Question: How do I sign up for CodeRED®?

Answer: The home page of the City of Punta Gorda's website, www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us, will have a link to both the CodeRED® Residential Data Collection Form as well as the CodeRED® Business Data Collection Form, which is completed on-line. This is the quickest, easiest way to sign up because the information you supply will immediately update the City of Punta Gorda's CodeRED® telephone number database.

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can fill out a paper form that will be available at the Public Safety Building at 1410 Tamiami Trail. This form is a duplicate of the on-line form.

Question: Can I arrange to have CodeRED® call my place of business?

Answer: Yes. Go to the City's website (www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us) and click on the CodeRED® link. When the Residential Data Collection form opens, click on the button labeled "Click to Switch to Business Data" and fill in the required information. *Please note that emergency calls can only be delivered to a direct dial number. **Automated attendants will disrupt the process and calls will not be delivered.***

Question: Who provides CodeRED® service? Is the company reputable?

Answer: Emergency Communications Network in Ormond Beach, Florida, provides the service to the City of Punta Gorda. In business since 1996, the company provides CodeRED® service to approximately 30 percent of Florida counties and 10 percent of Florida cities. Among CodeRED®'s many current clients are North Port, Venice, Orlando, Orange County, Naples, Marco Island, Longboat Key, Ft. Myers Beach and Collier County.

Question: I live in Punta Gorda, but I am not a city resident. Can I sign up for CodeRED®?

Answer: No, unfortunately. The City of Punta Gorda pays for CodeRED® service based on its own population. However, we encourage you to check with the county or city in

which you live. Many use automated telephone notification systems to alert residents in times of emergency.

For updates, you can also check local news media sources and visit the City of Punta Gorda's website, www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us.

City staff members will regularly check the CodeRED® database and eliminate addresses and telephone numbers not located within the city limits of Punta Gorda.

CodeRED® is a vitally important service, and is yet another way your Punta Gorda City government is seeking to improve public communications and reach out to citizens.

If you have any further questions about CodeRED®, please call the Punta Gorda Police Department at (941) 575-5513 and leave a message clearly stating your name and phone number and a member of the staff will contact you.