everything apple!

The TarMac Vaporware Gazette

How to set up your iPhone for disaster alerts

by Jason Snell | macworld.com | October 19, 2017

As everyone gets smartphones and drops their land lines, it's become increasingly complicated to get the word out when an emergency strikes. Emergency authorities have the ability to make mass calls to land lines in a geographic area, but it's harder to collect information about cellphones.

All smartphones, including the iPhone, now support wireless emergency alerts, which can be pushed out by local agencies and result in a push notification with a surprising noise. (Make sure this setting is switched on—it is by default—by tapping on Notifications in the Settings app and scrolling all the way to the Government Alerts section at the very bottom.) In Santa Rosa, authorities were reluctant to send evacuation warnings over this channel because they couldn't target specific neighborhoods and were concerned about causing a wide panic that might gridlock roads and interfere with evacuations and firefighting personnel.

It really got me thinking about what would happen if there was a fire or other disaster affecting my neighborhood, requiring me to be alerted—especially if it happened in the middle of the night, as it did in Santa Rosa. I don't sleep with my iPhone anywhere near me and I'm a user of timed Do Not Disturb on both my iPhone and my iPad. I also generally leave the mute switch on my iPhone turned on and my iPad often has its volume set all the way down.

Is my clever attempt to not be disturbed by a wrong number, spam text, or pointless app notification in the middle of the night actually risking my life by making it easier to ignore emergency notifications? It's possible. So here are a few modifications I've made to my devices in the aftermath of the California fires.

• Expand Your iPhone's Favorites List
I have Do Not Disturb set to pass through any calls from family members in my Favorites list, but I've since added more of my local friends to that list, so that if there's something happening locally, it's easier for those calls to break through.

• Allow a contact to break through Do Not Disturb
An important note if you're trying to reach an iPhone user in the event of an emergency: Do Not Disturb has an option to allow any number that calls twice in a three-minute period to ring the phone.

Why every Apple user should be using a VPN

Cult of Mac Deals | cultomac.com | October 18, 2017

If you think the buzz around using a VPN service these days is exaggerated hype and paranoia, think again. Never before have so many day-to-day human interactions and transactions occurred online.

And that's not changing, not anytime soon at least. So, why do you need a virtual private network?

What is a VPN?
It helps to first clarify a VPN's functionality. A VPN works by extending a private network over a public connection — think of the Wi-Fi connection you use when working at your favorite cafe. Users log in to a VPN service through a browser window, similarly to how you would log in to an email account. Then, through a series of pings back and forth between discrete networks to secure the connection, their internet experience becomes secure and encrypted — meaning free from spying or hacking and otherwise malicious activity.

Global ransomware damage costs are predicted to exceed $5 billion this year, up from $325 million in 2015.

There's also the relatively new threat of malvertising, which takes advantage of the digital advertising free market to spread malware into legitimate online advertising networks and webpages. It's considered the contemporary cybercriminal's latest "sweet spot." They rely on your trust in your favorite websites, and use that to get the jump on you and your personal information.

And don't think that just because you use a Mac, you're less vulnerable to attack. Just because Apple products have the added benefit of robust security built-in, they're still some of the most popular machines around, running on one of the most dominant operating systems in the world. For cybercriminals, that's like being able to hack into the biggest bank in the world — sure, it's hard work on their end, but it results in big profits.

3 benefits to using a VPN
1. Surf the web safely while connected to public Wi-Fi.
When you use a VPN, you can use public Wi-Fi without worrying that your data will be harvested. That means you can safely browse in your favorite spaces, and even use city-wide Wi-Fi connections while you're traveling.
2. Circumvent location-based streaming rules.
One of the biggest annoyances about streaming content when traveling is that different locations have different rules about what can be available to stream. With a VPN, you can choose the location you want to appear as though you're streaming from, helping you bypass location-based content restrictions.
3. Add an always-on layer of protection with automatic encryption.
With a VPN, your data is always encrypted — meaning it's safe from malware, hackers and even the government (wait, what?).

These days, even governing bodies are behaving in pretty suspect ways: This year, Congress passed legislation allowing your internet service provider to sell your browsing data and app history usage to third parties. What does that mean? That really and truly, everyone's incredibly personal data can be compiled into a dossier and sold to the highest bidder for extremely aggressive and highly personalized advertising.

Plans suggested by Macworld and Cult of Mac:
• 2 are listed at the end of the above article — *https://www.cultofmac.com/496860/best-vpns-mac-users/*
• MacWorld.com recommends Windscribe VPN (for a limited time at a $49 lifetime cost)

Disaster, cont.

If you call someone and don't get through, try them right back just in case they've got Do Not Disturb and this setting turned on.

If you don't want to clutter your Favorites list, there's another way to allow a contact to break through Do Not Disturb. To enable this feature, choose a contact, tap Edit, and tap on Ringtone. At the top of the Ringtone screen is an option called Emergency Bypass. Turn this feature on and all calls and messages from this contact will make noises and vibrations, regardless of your Do Not Disturb setting.

•Nixle

I used this feature for a new contact that I added to my list this week: Nixle. Nixle is a service that many community agencies in the U.S. now use in order to send out emergency alerts on an opt-in basis. To use Nixle, text your zip code to 888777.

When I signed up for Nixle, I started getting alerts from my local police and fire agencies, but I also got lower-priority advisories, not only from my local agencies but from some nearby agencies that didn't really affect me.

Fortunately, Nixle lets you customize what alerts you receive by logging in to the Nixle website and customizing your alerts. Now Nixle knows the specific agencies I want to hear from, and that I only want to receive true emergency alerts, not lower-priority advisories. I added Nixle's text address to my contacts list and marked it as Emergency Bypass, so its texts break through Do Not Disturb and make a noise, which is what I want.

Right now all of our methods of sending emergency alerts are combining with our abandonment of land lines and use of smartphone features to avoid being annoyed to make things a bit of a mess. And in the case of a fast-moving disaster, that can be dangerous.

Complete article at https://www.macworld.com/article/3234384/ iphone-ipad/how-to-set-up-your-iphone-for-disaster-alerts.html

Apple fixes some ancient MacBook Pros for free

by Killian Bell | cultofmac.com | October 13, 2017

Component shortages are still causing problems for some Retina MacBook Pro repairs. Apple is hoping to appease customers with free battery replacements for 15-inch MacBook Pro units released in 2012 and early 2013. And because its batteries are fixed to this enclosure, it cannot replace one without the other.

This is causing a problem for those who own one of these machines and have a faulty battery. However, if you're willing to wait around a month, Apple will replace your battery for free.

To find out if your battery needs servicing, click the Apple logo in the menu bar on your machine. Select About this Mac, then select System Report. Now click Power and locate the Health section. If it reads "Service Battery," you need to see Apple.

See more at https://www.cultofmac.com/508417/apple-still-swaps-2012-2013-macbook-pro-batteries-wait/

Apple's "fast" iPhone 8 charger isn't as quick as you think

by Charlie Sorrel | cultofmac.com | October 13, 2017

The iPhones 8 and X both support Apple's "fast-charging" option, which has been available on the iPad pro since the first 13-inch model. Fast charging lets you use a powerful USB-C charger, along with a USB-C-to-Lightning cable, to charge your iPhone quicker than you can with the standard iPhone or iPad chargers. But is it worth the $74 those accessories will cost? According to tests run by software engineer/startup investor Dan Loewenherz, the answer is no.

https://www.cultofmac.com/508351/apples-fast-iphone-8-charger-isnt-as-quick-as-you-think/

Take control of Do Not Disturb mode on Mac

by Charlie Sorrel | cultofmac.com | October 18, 2017

Do you know how to turn on your Mac's Do Not Disturb mode? Open up the Notification sidebar, pull down, and toggle the switch. It works great. Right up until you look at the dock, or the app switcher, and see a bunch of big red badges hassling you to read your email, or check your boss's Slack messages. If only you could turn off those red badges all at once, instead of having to toggle them in the settings for each app. That's just what Undisturbed was built to do. It's a little app that sits in your menubar and lets you toggle DND, which is already more convenient than the official way to do it. But it also switches off those red notification badges. **NB: Undisturbed is a free download, and comes from outside the Mac App Store, so be aware**.

More info at https://www.cultofmac.com/509033/undisturbed-takes-control-mac-do-not-disturb-mode/

Quick Tips

• **Quick Lock Screen.** A new feature in High Sierra is the ability to quickly lock your Mac. The Lock Screen command is in the Apple menu at the bottom, just before the Log Out option. You can also use the keyboard shortcut Command+Control+Q.

• **How To Use Face ID On Your iPhone.** Face ID is a facial recognition system that replaces Apple's Touch ID fingerprint scanner on some devices. It uses sensors arrayed around the iPhone's front-facing camera to scan your face and, if the scan matches the data on file, perform certain actions (typically unlocking the phone). For more information, check out this web site: *https://www.lifewire.com/face-id-4151714*