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Updated: Airtel Launches Location Based Emergency Alert Service

By [Apurva Chaudhary](#) on December 3, 2012



Updated below

[Bharti Airtel](#) has announced a 24x7 location based, Emergency Alert Service, that lets its customers send an alert with their geographic location to 10 of their selected contacts simultaneously with a call.



How to use: To use the service, Airtel subscribers need to activate the service by dialing 55100 and follow menu options. Users can then add 10 contacts they would like to SMS/call in case of an emergency. To add contacts users need to SMS START <MobileNumber1>, <MobileNumber2>, <MobileNumber3> up to 10 numbers to 55100. Airtel charges an activation fee of Rs 30 per 30 days.

Send an emergency alert: When in an emergency and unable to talk, users can call 55100 and their contacts will receive voice and SMS alerts with the user's location details. To send an alert SMS to their contacts, users can also SMS HELP to 55100 and send alerts to all of their 10 contacts. Users can also notify their contacts about their safety by sending an SMS SAFE

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to 55100. At present, it's not clear whether Airtel charges to send an SMS or make a call, we will update the post shortly.

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Update: Airtel has confirmed that after activating the service, calling the IVR 55100 is toll free and SMS are also free.

It should be noted that Airtel already offers an emergency call service but it's restricted only to emergency numbers.

Challenges: The service does have its value for women, and in case of natural calamities such as tsunami, earthquake, cyclone or disasters like fire & accidents. However, we're not sure if the service will be helpful even in case of natural disasters such as cyclones where excess amount of calls and SMS usually tends to jam the network.

We believe that the service uses triangulation to determine the location, which might not be accurate all the time. For an emergency service that touts to send location details in case of an emergency, the service needs to find a better way to collect location data. However, we are not sure whether there's a way to collect location data from GPS without using an app.

Other developments: Airtel had previously [launched](#) a location based service called Buddy Finder and [Friend Locator](#). In September, Airtel had also [launched](#) its own location app for smartphones, offering voice based turn by turn navigation, and real time traffic information, in addition to route planning and POI (Points of Interests) search.

