

How does AlertNow distinguish a live person from an answering machine?

AlertNow utilizes the industry's most Advanced Answering Machine Detection (AAMD) software. The system starts the broadcast immediately upon telephone pickup; simultaneously, it is listening for interruptions. If the system is not interrupted by noise or someone speaking within the first 3.5 seconds, the message is delivered in its entirety. If the system detects a greeting longer than a few seconds, the system treats this as an outgoing message from an answering machine and will wait for a pause (usually after the beep) before delivering the message to be recorded.

I said "hello" and no message played. OR**The message started, but then stopped. What happened?**

The AlertNow system plays the message as soon as the phone is picked up. However, errors can occur if the person repeatedly says "hello" or answers in a noisy environment (i.e. traffic, children playing, loud music or television, dogs barking, etc.). Generally, if a person offers an extended greeting such that it overlaps the AlertNow message, the system pauses, waits for silence, and replays the message from the beginning. With background noise, it is possible that the system was unable to detect the end of the "greeting" and thus the message did not initiate. In a noisy environment, where silence is unattainable, **call recipients can press 1 on their phone keypad, and the message will play from the beginning without interruption.**

What if the line is busy or there is no answer?

AlertNow will make up to four attempts to reach each number, with three minutes in between each call (depending on account settings). If the message is not delivered by the fourth attempt, it will show on the broadcast report as busy, disconnected, or no answer.

Why is my answering machine recording only half of the message?

If the answering machine greeting does not initiate soon enough or is too quiet, the system will read this as a live person and begin playing the message, even though the machine has yet to start recording. This will result in a recording of silence (if the AlertNow message finishes playing before the machine begins recording) or of just the last portion of the AlertNow message. The recommended solution is to have parents re-record their outgoing message in a loud, clear voice so that there are no pauses. Alternately, if the answering machine is set to record for a specific amount of time (e.g. 30 seconds) and the AlertNow message runs longer than that, this will also result in message cut-off.

Note about Sprint/Nextel phones: Often when dialing a number in the Sprint/Nextel network, the caller hears a recording: "Please wait while we locate the subscriber you are calling." Then there is silence. AlertNow interprets this as the correct time to begin playing the message. A recipient may pick up mid-message, or only part of the message may be left on their voicemail.

Note about Alltel phones: The Alltel voicemail system requires the caller to press a number in order to leave a message, and if nothing is pressed, will begin recording about 10 seconds later. AlertNow cannot navigate menus, so this may result in a partial message being left.

My caller ID showed that the school had called but there was no voicemail. Why?

Most likely, the school's message was too short, and there was not sufficient time for the answering machine detection software to engage. The message delivery was completed before your answering machine had a chance to start recording. Alternately, your machine could be full. Also, keep in mind that for systems where it is necessary to enter a mailbox number, AlertNow is unable to leave a message. Lastly, it could be due to the number of rings before pickup. AlertNow is set to ring a line six times. If an answering machine is set to pick up on seven or more rings, the message may not be delivered to that machine.

Why doesn't the school's name appear on the caller ID?

AlertNow passes the caller ID information to the local telephone carriers, but it is up to those carriers to pass it along to their customers. Furthermore, different local telephone companies process caller ID information differently. Some provide the name associated with the number, while others do not. For example, a telephone company may require an individual to subscribe to "Advanced Caller ID" in order to receive the school name along with the phone number.

Will the system call phone numbers with extensions?

AlertNow cannot guarantee that phone numbers with extensions will successfully be dialed, because phone systems vary so widely. For instance, if menu navigation is required before entering the extension, AlertNow will be unable to deliver the message successfully. However, many systems allow the caller to immediately enter an extension, or there is a live receptionist; in both of these scenarios, AlertNow has a good chance of being successful, if the number is formatted correctly. The number must look like this when entered into AlertNow:

800-914-1817 x450

The dashes are not important; the key is the x450. It must be a lower case x. If it says ext or X, it will not work, as the system will discard the number as invalid.

I have a telemarketer screening device/service. How will that affect the call?

If a contact has a device on their telephone line (e.g. TeleZapper, Privacy Manager, Privacy Director, etc.) designed to prevent automated phone systems from connecting, they may not receive an AlertNow call. For example, with Privacy Director all unidentifiable incoming calls are rerouted and the callers must identify themselves for the call to go through. Because our system is automated, it will not identify itself; thus the call will not get through to the recipient. For screening systems that are dependent on Caller ID's, recipients can authorize access for their school's phone number through their device. Note that calls identified with the school's number on the Caller ID generally have no trouble getting through Privacy Manager type systems. Only calls with the emergency Caller ID of 411 tend to get caught up in Privacy Manager's net. You can always have AlertNow Customer Support change your account settings, to have the district's number display for emergency broadcasts.