(Approx. 873 words)

Alerts, Notifications, and Alarms - Oh, My!

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I have started using alerts, notifications. and alarms to get my attention. Some of these come to my phone and some by email. Most of the time, I can choose what works best for me for each purpose. Of course, there are notifications that you get even if you didn't specifically ask for them, such as doctor appointment reminders, books that are ready to pick up at the library, and many others.  
  
Here are some of my finds and handy tools.  
  
Alerts:  
  
My bank's website allows me to set up alerts for activity related to the bank and credit card accounts. For example, whenever my credit card is charged, either in a store or online, I immediately get an email. If that card is ever stolen or hacked, I will know right away. I can also set up alerts for payments due, deposits, balances, etc.   
  
We have a smart indoor thermometer that alerts us to temperature changes outside a specific range that we set up. That way we can tell from wherever we are reading email if the house gets too hot or cold.  
  
Notifications:  
  
You can [sign up at the AZDOT website](https://azdot.gov/sign-up-for-email-updates-from-adot) to be notified of construction activity, accidents, or delays on I-19. After you submit your email address, you can choose which areas of the state, including I-19, you wish to include. These notifications were particularly handy when the Irvington construction area was still active. They also have a [phone app](https://azdot.gov/about/transportation-safety/adot-alerts-phone-app) that can notify you of highway events.  
  
The US Postal Service offers a free [Informed Delivery](https://informeddelivery.usps.com/box/pages/intro/start.action) service to let you know what mail is coming to your mailbox. As mail is scanned in the postal processing center, an image is sent to your email address. (Lately, my email keeps showing me a picture of a postcard from the USPS that says that mail may be delayed. Ironically, that postcard still has not yet arrived!)  
  
UPS's [My Choice](https://www.ups.com/us/en/services/tracking/mychoice.page) system tracks your packages and notifies you of their delivery. It's fun to check the map that shows the exact location of the delivery truck when it is in your neighborhood! FedEx has a similar [Delivery Manager](https://www.fedex.com/en-us/delivery-manager.html) system and offers to deliver the package to a secure location where you can pick it up if you don't want it left outside your door.  
  
On Election Day, I learned of the phone app from [The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2018/may/15/the-guardian-app) that sends alerts to the "lock screen" of my phone when breaking news occurs. The Guardian is a British newspaper with a great reputation and worldwide coverage. So during the evening on 11/3, as election results started coming in, I would hear the distinctive tone I set up for my phone. That sound would prompt me to go look at the television to see the latest results. It was very handy. I am still enjoying the breaking news. I'm using the free version of the app, though a premium version is also available.  
  
I have also subscribed to the free [New York Times Morning Briefing](https://www.nytimes.com/newsletters/morning-briefing) and "breaking news" emails. (I usually get the Guardian notifications about 5 minutes before the NYT ones!) Their Morning Briefing has a summary of news headlines and a mini crossword puzzle. To read the entire article or enjoy the full crossword puzzles, you need to pay for a subscription. Lately, the headlines have been enough for me!  
  
The weather station on our roof sends us an email every day with the day's high and low temperatures, wind speeds, and other data (the rain measure has never worked well, so its rainfall reports are rather suspect). It even has its own website, which I can access from my phone. If we ever get to travel again, we'll be able to see what the weather is like at home!  
  
Alarms:  
  
Alarms aren't just for waking you up. They can be great reminders to take your medicine, walk the dog, or whatever suits you. I use the Alarm feature of the Clock app on my Android phone and expect that an iPhone offers the same functionality.  
  
Another phone alarm goes off at 6:59 pm Mon–Fri. We're usually preparing dinner at that time, and we like to listen to ["Exploring Music"](https://www.wfmt.com/programs/exploring-music/) with Bill McLaughlin on the radio (KUAT, 90.5 FM). This reminds me to set the tuner to the radio so we can listen.  
  
Once a month, my husband needs to submit data for his [Rainlog](https://rainlog.org/map) project, where citizen scientists report the amount of rain received in their rain gauge. So, that alarm goes off on the first day of each month at noon as a reminder for him to do that. We have it on our shared Google calendar as a recurring task, but do we ever look there anymore? That calendar is rather empty these days.  
  
It's nice that you can set up and customize multiple alarms to recur on specific days and times.  
  
There are so many possibilities out there that you can subscribe to or set up. Give it a try! If you have a favorite attention-getter you would like to share, reply to this newsletter and let me know.