

A **Sig Alert** is defined by the California Highway Patrol as “any unplanned event that causes the closing of one lane of traffic for 30 minutes or more”. Sig Alerts are issued by the CHP and are posted on their website, broadcast on radio, television stations, and electronic message signs throughout state.

SigAlerts originated in 1955 with the Los Angeles Police Department. Loyd C. "Sig" Sigmon was Executive Vice President of Golden West Broadcasters (a company owned by singing cowboy Gene Autry). Sigmon had worked for Golden West's station KMPC and developed a specialized radio receiver and reel-to-reel tape recorder. When the receiver picked up a particular tone, it would record the subsequent bulletin. The device cost about \$600.

The LAPD's chief, William H. Parker, was interested, though skeptical, warning the inventor, "We're going to name this damn thing Sigalert." More practically, he refused to use it unless the receivers were made available to all Los Angeles radio stations — it could not be a KMPC monopoly. Initially, half a dozen stations installed Sigmon receivers that had "Sigalert" stamped on their side. When a message had been received and recorded from the LAPD, a red light, sometimes accompanied by a buzzer, would alert the radio stations' engineers. Depending on the nature of the problem, the engineer could air the police broadcast immediately, interrupting regular programming if necessary.

The first "Sigmon traffic alerts" was on Labor Day weekend in 1955 which was also marked beginning of the new fall TV season and the premiere of *Highway Patrol* starring Broderick Crawford on KTLA. The first major SigAlert broadcast was on January 22, 1956 with the derailment of a passenger train near Union Station and requested any available doctors and nurses to respond to the scene. In 1969, when the CHP assumed responsibility for Los Angeles freeway traffic from the LAPD, they took control of the SigAlert system as well.