



FEMA

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS BULLETIN

Week of December 22, 2014

Important Dates and Deadlines:

[Public Assistance Simplified
Procedures Thresholds](#)

(January 20, 2015)

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Helps Protect Communities

As 2015 approaches, FEMA encourages public safety officials to start the new year by becoming an alerting authority for FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), the nation's alert and warning infrastructure.

The system has already saved many lives, with multiple state and local officials successfully using IPAWS during 2014. Examples include:

- City officials in California sent Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) to instruct citizens to evacuate during a massive fire at the Port of Los Angeles.
- State officials in Mississippi used IPAWS to notify the public of a hazardous materials spill on an ice-covered highway bridge.
- State officials in Iowa used WEAs to warn citizens who were not within hearing range of sirens about a tornado.
- Local officials in Portland, Oregon warned citizens to stay off roads that were closed to non-emergency traffic during a storm with freezing rain.

Approved state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal public safety officials such as emergency managers, the National Weather Service and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children use IPAWS to simultaneously send one message through multiple communication pathways:

- Radio and television through the Emergency Alert System;
- Cellular phones through WEAs;
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's All-Hazards Weather Radio;
- Internet applications and websites via the IPAWS All-Hazards Information Feed;
- Local and unique alerting systems including digital road signs, sirens, text-to-Braille translators, emergency telephone networks, etc.

When accurate information is received quickly through multiple mediums - radio, television, weather radio, the Internet and on personal cell phones - it helps more people get out of harm's way when a threat exists. Why not let 2015 be the year to join other public safety officials already using IPAWS to help protect their communities?

For an introduction to IPAWS, there are online Independent Study (IS) courses, [IS-247a "Integrated Public Alert and Warning System"](#) and [IS-248 "IPAWS for the American People."](#) The courses highlight key features and benefits of IPAWS and outline the authorities responsible for sending alert and warning messages as well as actions the public can take before and during an emergency.

For more information about IPAWS, visit www.ready.gov/alerts, www.fema.gov/ipaws or contact the IPAWS Program Management Office at ipaws@dhs.gov.

FEMA's Office of External Affairs provides this bulletin to highlight recent and upcoming program and policy activities and announcements. Feedback is welcome at fema-ea-bulletin@fema.dhs.gov. Previous editions are available at the [FEMA library](#).

Open Joint Field Offices (Including Virtual)

AZ, CA, HI, IA, KY, MI,
MN, MO, NE, NV, NY

[Learn more.](#)

Resolve to be Ready

The 2015 "[Resolve to be Ready](#)" campaign will focus on seasonal preparedness. The [Ready Campaign](#) encourages families to prepare throughout the year for all weather hazards.

REMINDER: FEMA Seeks Comments to Public Assistance Simplified Procedures Thresholds

FEMA seeks public comments from state, local, tribal and territorial governments, private non-profit organizations, and interested members of the public regarding the agency's recent revision of the Public Assistance simplified procedures program. FEMA is seeking comments on specific questions to inform any future revisions to the project thresholds that are updated annually based on the Consumer Price Index. Comments are due on **January 20, 2015**, and may be [submitted online](#).

Following the passage of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 and the accompanying Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013, Congress directed FEMA to evaluate its simplified procedures thresholds and immediately implement the recommendations. On January 29, 2014, FEMA issued its [report to Congress](#) that recommended several changes to the threshold and outlined FEMA's reasoning. On February 26, 2014, FEMA published a [final rule](#) amending both the minimum and maximum simplified procedures threshold for disasters declared on or after February 26, 2014.

This bulletin is not intended to provide a comprehensive list of policies that are open for public comment, nor does it describe all of the instructions or requirements necessary to submit a comment. For a complete list of instructions and deadlines please click the hyperlinks included. FEMA does not endorse any non-government organizations, entities or services.

Disasters.data.gov Launches

The Obama Administration launched disasters.data.gov, a public resource to foster collaboration and the continual improvement of disaster-related open data, free tools and new ways to empower survivors, first responders and all levels of government with critical information and resources.

The Administration launched the [White House Innovation for Disaster Response and Recovery Initiative in response to Hurricane Sandy](#). Over the last two years, the initiative has hosted workshops that have resulted in [major commitments from the public and private sector](#) at this year's [Demo Day](#), the first [hardware hackathon for disaster preparedness held in support of the Initiative](#), and numerous workshops, and now disasters.data.gov as the Initiative's first major online presence. Some highlights include:

- **[“Types of Disasters” Landing Pages](#)**: Categorizes open data sets, apps and tools to make relevant resources easier to find.
- **[Apps & Tools](#)**: The portal includes apps and tools that can be deployed at minimal cost by first responders, emergency managers, volunteer organizations, survivors and other stakeholders. The apps and tools featured were presented at the White House Innovation for Disaster Response and Recovery [Demo Day](#).
- **[Call to Action: Data Stewards](#)**: Datasets relevant to disaster preparedness (including prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery) have traditionally been closed by default to the public. To help empower the community with information that can improve community resilience, the Administration is working with stakeholders to open a series of disaster-related datasets from all levels of government and the private sector. [Learn more](#) and email disastertech@ostp.gov if interested in participating.
- **[Innovator Challenge](#)**: The Administration is unveiling the first in a series of Innovator Challenges that highlight pressing needs from the disaster preparedness community. The inaugural challenge focuses on a need identified from firsthand experience of local emergency managers, responders, survivors, and federal departments and agencies, asking innovators: “How might we leverage real-time sensors, open data, social media, and other tools to help reduce the number of fatalities from flooding?”
- **[Join the “Innovation for Disasters” Movement](#)**: There are numerous ways for tech entrepreneurs, developers, hardware tinkerers, journalists, researchers, government officials, first responders, survivors or potential volunteers to join the Innovation for Disasters movement and get involved. Learn more [here](#).

The Administration looks forward to input as they continue to expand the website and hope participants will join the conversation using #disastertech. More information can be found on the [White House blog post](#) and [Twitter feed](#).

Emergency Management Institute Assists with Preparation for Super Bowl Exercise Program

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) recently assisted the city of Glendale, Arizona, in preparation for the upcoming Super Bowl, using the Virtual Table Top Exercise (VTTX) program. EMI virtually partnered with the cities of Glendale, Houston, Minneapolis and four other groups for this specific VTTX request. EMI reached more than 70 participants with this capability based, no cost, electronically formatted, four hour training tool. EMI drafted and produced the situation manual for the exercise, and the Fire Department of New York also participated to share lessons learned from last year's Super Bowl.

EMI offers the VTTX program to the emergency management community in direct support of FEMA's mission. The VTTX program offers a flexible and adaptive set of exercise documents that can be included as part of the community's emergency management training plan and be repurposed later for further training.

EMI has 45 scenarios available that communities can request to use to ensure emergency management policies and procedures are set before a specific event takes place. Additional scenarios can be produced upon request. For more information, please contact Douglas Kahn at (301) 447-7645 or douglas.kahn@fema.dhs.gov.

The mission of the Office of External Affairs (OEA) is to engage, inform, and educate all of FEMA's stakeholders in support of the Agency's programs and initiatives to achieve its mission. OEA accomplishes its mission by coordinating and maintaining visibility of public and internal communications; advising FEMA program and support offices on decision-making regarding policies, plans, and actions that affect stakeholder, media, and Congressional audiences; and organizing outreach efforts targeted at principal stakeholders to include local, state, territorial, and tribal governments, the private sector, national organizations and associations, and the American public.

