



Alerting Americans with Access and Functional Needs

BACKGROUND

- Traditionally, mass media used to alert and warn the American public has not incorporated the use of technologies needed to reach Americans with access and functional needs.
- Executive Order 13407 requires FEMA to “include in the public alert and warning system the capability to alert and warn all Americans, including those with disabilities” therefore reaching our whole community.
- In response, FEMA established the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).

COMMON ALERTING PROTOCOL (CAP)

- The CAP standard provides an opportunity to improve emergency alert information delivery to Americans with access and functional needs.
- CAP alerts can transport rich multi-media attachments and links in alert messages.
- The use of CAP will enable industry partners to develop content and/or devices that can be used by individuals with access and functional needs to receive emergency alerts.

WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS (WEAs)

- FEMA’s IPAWS-OPEN platform allows alerting authorities to send WEAs, which are geographically targeted, text-like alerts to the public via their wireless handsets.
- WEAs use a unique signal and vibration to attract attention, which may be helpful to individuals with hearing or vision loss.
- The public does not need to sign up to receive WEAs and wireless customers will not be charged for the delivery of WEA messages.
- Wireless carriers will sell WEA capable phones with the service already included.
- To find out if your existing phone has this service, please contact your wireless mobile service provider.

COLLABORATING WITH INDUSTRY

- The IPAWS Program Management Office (PMO) will continue to establish, develop, and

maintain collaborative working relationships with organizations and agencies to effectively identify and integrate the alert and warning requirements and reach the whole community.

- A sample of our partners include: Signtel, Deaf-Link, Alertus, National Public Radio, Readspeak, Roam Secure, Virtual Private Network Voice Corp, and public organizations such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

FEMA’S OFFICE OF DISABILITY INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION (ODIC) ROUNDTABLES

- The IPAWS PMO partners with FEMA’s ODIC to conduct semi-annual Roundtables for Federal Partners and Industry Experts to discuss alert and warning issues for people with access and functional needs
- The Roundtables provide periodic updates to our industry partners, elicit information on emerging technologies and systems that can integrate CAP, and facilitate robust discussions between industry and advocacy organizations.
- Representatives from over a dozen leading organizations representing individuals with access and functional needs as participants in the Roundtables.

EMERGING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

- There is growing interest in developing assistive technology products that support or provide direct alert and warning capabilities to individuals with access and functional needs.
- The IPAWS PMO participates in operational testing and evaluation of products. A sample of technologies is on the FEMA IPAWS webpage.
- Technologies and products are routinely incorporated into IPAWS demonstrations at conferences.
- The IPAWS PMO is continually working toward integrating additional technologies and encouraging industry and private sector innovation to meet the needs of our whole community.