

CAP IPAWS FAQ

Is CAP the new EAS?

Message origination and dissemination in Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) format is proposed as a means of easing message flow and generation workload for alerting officials and broadening the message distribution and reach. CAP does not replace EAS. For EAS participants IPAWS CAP message distribution will serve as an additional overlay backing up existing means of relaying EAS messages.

What is the FEMA IPAWS supplied part of the system?

FEMA IPAWS is furnishing the message authentication and message aggregation pieces for CAP / EAS. Alerting officials can compose a CAP message using any of a number of authoring tools, the message originator's credentials will then be checked and the message posted to the aggregator. Properly constructed messages will then be available for retrieval by CAP enabled EAS devices for broadcast and cable operators. The CAP EAS device will perform a text to speech conversion of the message content if the originator has not included an audio message for broadcast. CAP messages sent to the aggregator will also be passed to Commercial Mobile Service Providers for the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS). CMAS can deliver a 90 character message to all compatible handsets logged in to cellular towers serving an affected area.

Who decides what is kosher to send and what isn't?

The IPAWS Aggregator confirms that the source of an alert is an authorized IPAWS user. The system examines messages for proper formatting to assure the message is processed properly but it does not screen messages for content. Message content is the sole responsibility of the alerting official generating a message. Any message processed is traceable back to the issuing official.

Will IPAWS be operational by the September 30th CAP/EAS deadline?

FE MA expects to have the IPAWS aggregator operating well ahead of CAP/EAS deadline.

Is CAP another input for EAS?

While individual states and local areas may revise their EAS plans and re-arrange monitoring assignments, for most individual EAS participants such as broadcast radio, television and cable operators IPAWS CAP messages can serve as an additional input to their selected EAS device.

Does CAP require an internet connection?

IPAWS CAP messages may be pulled from the IPAWS aggregator via an internet connection. Individual states, local areas, broadcast companies and program service providers may provide additional or alternative delivery pathways for CAP messages.

Was CAP created for broadcasters?

CAP was originally created by a former broadcaster and nurtured by the Partnership for Public Warning, a cross-discipline group with significant broadcaster participation. It has since been accepted and is in use as an international standard.

What is FEMA doing regarding training / education of alert originators?

FEMA is in the process of developing an online independent study course regarding the EAS. The course addresses the development of effective alert and warning messages; use of emergency alert equipment; and overall understanding of the EAS.

What is FEMA doing for persons with access and special needs?

FEMA IPAWS has been performing outreach to special needs organizations in several different forums. In July 2010, FEMA IPAWS representatives attended the Industry Leadership Conference on Disabilities and Special Needs and the National Council on Independent Living Annual Conference. FEMA IPAWS plans to participate in these conferences again in 2011. The FEMA IPAWS Division regularly attends a working group led by the FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, with representation from multiple FEMA program offices, other Department of Homeland Security components, and other Federal Departments and Agencies.

What is IPAWS doing to coordinate AMBER Alerts?

FEMA IPAWS has met with DOJ representatives and members of the National Council for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to discuss message standards, flow and coordination. Although it is expected that most requests for AMBER Alerts will continue to be submitted directly to NCMEC, policies and procedures are being incorporated into IPAWS to automatically direct any AMBER Alert requests submitted to the IPAWS Aggregator to NCMEC for review and approval in accordance with DOJ policies prior to release for dissemination by EAS and CMAS and other IPAWS partner systems.

Is IPAWS actively coordinating with NASBA and other industry representatives?

Yes, FEMA IPAWS has actively participated in and supported the NASBA EAS Summit meetings held in Washington, DC. Additionally we maintain an on-going dialog with NASBA executives and committee members.

Is IPAWS actively coordinating proposed alerting activities with the National Weather Service?

IPAWS regularly meets with representatives of the National Weather Service to discuss and coordinate the flow of alerts both to, and from, NWS. IPAWS currently processes Non-Weather Emergency Messages through the Open Platform for Emergency Networks (OPEN) as part of the National Weather Service's HazCollect program. IPAWS does not expect that NOAA Weather Radio will transmit CAP messages in data format but rather continue transmitting spoken work messages accompanied by Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) data.

Does the event code used in a CAP-delivered emergency message mean the same thing in CAP as EAS?

The three-letter event codes have the same meaning in both the CAP message and EAS message.

Will CAP necessitate rewrite of state and local plans?

Neither the FCC nor FEMA currently propose abandoning state EAS relay networks. Message delivery using CAP via Internet Protocol is proposed as a supplementary layer of message dissemination. If a state EAS plan relies solely on CAP to disseminate a Governor's message, then supplemental changes to the EAS plan may be necessary.

Will the FEMA IPAWS CAP message processing system, the IPAWS Aggregator, accept and process weather alerts and warnings from National Weather Service?

Yes, alerts and warnings from the NWS will go through the IPAWS Aggregator to make them available for the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), CAP/EAS devices and any other CAP-based message delivery system drawing from the IPAWS Aggregator.