



Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

- FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) program provides an Internet-based capability for Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local authorities to use in order to issue critical public alerts.
- The system is accessed through software that meets IPAWS system requirements.
- There is no cost to send messages through IPAWS, but there may be costs for alerting organizations to acquire or develop compatible software. See the IPAWS website for a list of vendors developing compatible solutions.
- IPAWS is not mandatory and does not replace existing methods of alerting, but instead offers new capabilities.
- IPAWS uses Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), an international standard developed by OASIS and adopted by FEMA.

EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS)

- FCC rules require broadcasters and other EAS participants to upgrade their equipment to be capable of receiving CAP alerts.
- States that update their EAS plans to reflect CAP implementation will be able to issue alerts on behalf of their governors, which EAS participants will be required to broadcast.

AMBER ALERT SYSTEM

- Agencies authorized under State AMBER Alert plans may use IPAWS to route AMBER Alerts to the Emergency Alert System.

COMMERCIAL MOBILE ALERT SYSTEM (CMAS)

- Under FCC rules, the Commercial Mobile Alert System will relay Presidential, AMBER, and Imminent Threat alerts to cell phones in an affected area via cell broadcast.
- Participating cell carriers will sell CMAS capable phones with the service already opted-in, no sign-up is necessary on the part of the public.
- The CMAS cell broadcast capability is only available through IPAWS.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE (NWS)

- NOAA Weather Radio and other NWS dissemination services may be accessed via IPAWS.
- NWS will use the IPAWS system to distribute CAP formatted alerts.

BENEFITS OF A CAP-BASED SYSTEM

- Standardized message format fosters alerting system compatibility.
- XML format facilitates Internet-based message exchange.
- CAP alerts can be sent to public over multiple communications methods.
- Capacity for information such as images, audio, video, geospatial data

INTEROPERABILITY

- In addition to its public alerting capabilities, IPAWS enables the interoperable exchange of private alerts and other emergency-related information between different incident management systems for enhanced situation awareness.

For more information, contact the IPAWS project management office at ipaws@dhs.gov, or log on to <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/index.shtm>.