TIP #22: Reaching Everyone in Your Community

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Program Management Office (PMO) is continually working toward integrating assistive technologies and encouraging industry and private sector innovation to make alerts more accessible. This is made possible because of common standards used for creating and disseminating alert information through IPAWS. By adopting these standards, developers of accessibility products and services can modify their products and services so end-users will receive alerts issued through the IPAWS system.

As the message originator, you should keep in mind the needs of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs:

- Provide messaging that is understood and usable by the community you are serving and minimize the use of abbreviations.
- The most important information should be presented first.
- Care must be taken when composing text that is converted to audio by text-to-speech equipment. (As is the case with an EAS message).
- Audio used to assist those who are blind or have low vision should be consistent with the text and ensure abbreviations are explained.
- Ample text and audio should be provided to explain images or maps, so that message recipients can understand the meaning of what is being conveyed graphically.
- Some mobile devices and current software programs provide screen reading and text-to-speech conversion capabilities for alerts delivered via internet technologies. When considering these and other translation technologies, craft messages that avoid non-standard language formats and terminology.

FEMA IPAWS will continue to establish, develop, and maintain collaborative working relationships with organizations and agencies to effectively identify and integrate alert and warning requirements in support of the whole community.

Please contact the IPAWS PMO at IPAWS@fema.dhs.gov with any questions.