

Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) Glossary

Alert Aggregator

The Alert Aggregator, known as the IPAWS Open Platform for Emergency Networks (IPAWS-OPEN), is the part of the IPAWS system that collects emergency alerts, authenticates the sender, and makes the alerts available to alert dissemination services.

Alerting Authority

An Alerting Authority is a jurisdiction with the designated authority to alert and warn the public through Federal, state, local, tribal and territorial laws.

Alert Originator

An Alert Originator is a person at the keyboard/screen composing and issuing the alert. The Alert Originator uses IPAWS in accordance with the Alerting Authority's plans, policies, and procedures to create and send out emergency messages.

Alert Origination Tool

Alert origination tools are software products used by emergency managers, public safety officials and other alerting authorities to create and send critical lifesaving messages to the public or to other emergency management officials for collaboration. An alert origination tool is needed to send messages through IPAWS.

AMBER Alert

The AMBER Alert Program is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies, broadcasters, transportation agencies and the wireless industry to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child abduction cases. AMBER alerts are one of the categories of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA).

Collaborative Operating Group (COG)

A Collaborative Operating Group or "COG" is a term used by IPAWS to designate an organization that has been granted access to the Alert Aggregator. A COG is established with IPAWS when a Federal, state, local, tribal or territorial Alerting Authority executes a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FEMA in order to access and use IPAWS.



Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS)

The Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), also referred to as Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), was established pursuant to the Warning, Alert and Response Network (WARN) Act under Federal Communication Commission (FCC) rules. CMAS enables alerting authorities to broadcast emergency alerts to wireless provider customers with compatible cellular devices who are located in the geographic vicinity of cellular towers serving an affected area.

Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)

The Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) is an XML-based OASIS data format standard adopted by FEMA for exchanging public warnings between alerting technologies. CAP allows a warning message to be sent simultaneously over many warning systems to many different outlets (such as radio, television, mobile devices, Internet).

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system governed by Federal Communication Commission (FCC) rules that requires broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service (SDARS) providers, and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers to supply the communications capability to the President to address the American public during a national emergency.

EAS is also used by the National Weather Service to relay weather-related warnings, and may be used by state, local, tribal and territorial authorities to deliver important emergency information about other types of hazardous situations.

Emergency Data Exchange Language - Distribution Element (EDXL-DE)

IPAWS implements the Emergency Data Exchange Language Distribution Element (EDXL-DE), an OASIS data specification used for routing emergency information. EDXL-DE may be used to exchange content in a wide variety of commonly used digital formats, including text, images, audio, video and more.

FIPS Codes

Federal Information Processing Standards Codes (FIPS Codes) are a standardized set of numeric or alphabetic codes issued by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to ensure uniform identification of geographic entities. The entities covered include states, counties, American Indian and Alaska Native areas, etc. FIPS codes are used by IPAWS as one method to specify geographic warning areas.

HazCollect

HazCollect is shorthand for the National Weather Service All-Hazards Emergency Message Collection System that allows authorized public officials to use NOAA communication pathways, such as NOAA weather radio, to send pre- and post-disaster alerts and warnings to the public.

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) was established by Presidential Executive Order 13407. In the event of a national emergency, the President will be able to use IPAWS to send a message to the American people quickly and simultaneously through multiple communications pathways.

IPAWS is also available to Federal, state, local, tribal and territorial government officials to alert the public via the Emergency Alert System, Wireless Emergency Alerts, NOAA Weather Radio and other National Weather Service dissemination channels, the Internet, existing unique warning systems and emerging distribution technologies.

Interoperability

Interoperability in the context of IPAWS refers to the use of standard data formats to enable the exchange of information between different platforms or software systems.

IPAWS-OPEN

IPAWS Open Platform for Emergency Networks (IPAWS-OPEN) is the Alert Aggregator that receives and authenticates messages transmitted by alerting authorities and routes them to alert dissemination services.

IPAWS PMO

The IPAWS Program Management Office (PMO) administers the IPAWS program and is staffed by FEMA employees and other contractor support personnel.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

A Memorandum of Agreement is a cooperative document written between parties to work together on an agreed-upon project or meet an agreed objective. FEMA executes MOAs with alerting authorities who wish to use IPAWS to send alerts and warnings, as well as developers who test alerting products in the IPAWS-OPEN test environment.

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR)

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. NWR continuously broadcasts warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information on frequencies in the 162 MHz band.

Non-Weather Emergency Message (NWEM)

NWEM refers to emergency messages for the public about hazardous events that are originated by government organizations other than the National Weather Service, but still use NWS alert dissemination services.

OASIS

The Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) is a not-for-profit consortium that drives the development, convergence and adoption of open standards for the global information society. The OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee develops international data standards relating to alerts and warnings as well as other aspects of emergency management.

Presidential Alert

A Presidential Alert is a category of Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) that is reserved for use of the President of the United States in the event of a national emergency. The equivalent alert in the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the Emergency Action Notification (EAN).

Primary Entry Point (PEP) Stations

Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations are radio broadcast stations that cooperatively participate with FEMA to provide emergency alert and warning information to the public prior to, during and after incidents and disasters.

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) were established pursuant to the Warning, Alert and Response Network (WARN) Act under Federal Communication Commission (FCC) rules. Alerting authorities can broadcast WEAs to wireless provider customers located in the geographic vicinity of cellular towers serving an affected area.

For more information visit <https://www.fema.gov/ipaws>. Contact the IPAWS PMO at ipaws@fema.dhs.gov.

The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.