

Including IPAWS in Drills, Workshops, and Exercises

The IPAWS Office, in collaboration with FEMA's National Exercise Division (NED), encourages and supports Alerting Authority participation in drills, workshops, and exercises. This Fact Sheet offers guidance on how you can use IPAWS during exercises and how we can help.

Why incorporate IPAWS into your exercise?

Public alerts, warnings and notifications (AWN) span all mission areas. AWN are not limited to response and recovery activities. Instead, public notification should be an emergency management practice before, during, and after an incident to lessen public concern and confusion. An informed public is key to community resilience. This means that messaging techniques and procedures must be practiced and exercised to improve AWN quality and effectiveness of operational practice.

Incorporating IPAWS into exercise conduct can help emergency managers:

- Evaluate decision-making processes regarding public notification
- Assess internal policies and procedures
- Determine effectiveness of utilizing IPAWS

The IPAWS Program Management Office fully supports inclusion of IPAWS into exercise conduct and offers the following resources:

1) IPAWS EXERCISE STARTER KIT (ESK)

The IPAWS ESK provides stakeholders with ready-to-use materials and templates to develop, conduct, and evaluate exercises tailored to their specific threats, resources, operational plans and procedures.

FEMA encourages Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial (FSLTT) Emergency Management Exercise Officers and Alerting Authorities to collaborate and coordinate the integration of IPAWS capabilities into existing exercises.

The IPAWS ESK can be found on the [Preparedness Toolkit](#), an online portal that provides the whole community with tools and resources to aid in implementing the National Preparedness System. Each kit includes customizable sample Facilitator/Evaluator Guide, sample Conduct Slides, sample Situation Manual (SitMan), sample Placemat, and sample Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs).



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2) IPAWS PROGRAM PLANNING TOOLKIT

The IPAWS Program Planning Toolkit is a set of resource documents, guides, and an online alert plan creator to assist local Alerting Authorities with producing a comprehensive all-hazards alerting plan inclusive of staff planning, standard operating procedures, tests, and exercises.

Complete with easy step-by-step instructions to empower those with basic alerting knowledge, the Toolkit generates a customized plan with actionable guidance for public safety personnel.

The IPAWS Program Planning Toolkit helps agencies to minimize alerting delays; plan for future alerts, warnings and notifications enhancements; facilitate interoperability across different technologies and improve information sharing among emergency management and public safety officials.

The IPAWS Program Planning Toolkit was derived from the collection of successful practices and lessons learned from hundreds of data points, including more than 200 emergency managers, public information officers, alerting originators and administrators, and alerting experts. It can be found on the FEMA website: [IPAWS Program Planning Toolkit | FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov/ipaws-program-planning-toolkit).

3) IPAWS TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The IPAWS Technical Support Services Team is equipped with exercise professionals certified through Homeland Security Emergency Evaluation Program (HSEEP). This means that you have experienced exercise professionals available to you to help plan exercise objectives, injects and scenarios.

HSEEP professionals are also available to assist NED with evaluation of IPAWS utilization during exercise conduct. Technical personnel are available through the IPAWS Technical Support Services Facility (TSSF).

The IPAWS TSSF is a fully functional and operational facility equipped to provide all levels of technical support to drills, workshops, exercises, seminars, and demonstrations. This support includes assistance with live alerts to the public, and demonstration alerts sent to the IPAWS TSSF, a closed and safe environment for Alerting Authorities to improve alerting proficiency, assessment of operating procedures, training employees, and exercise process assessment.

So how can I use IPAWS during an exercise?

Several options are available to you.

- Send alerts, warnings and/or notifications to the IPAWS TSSF. This includes activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), and Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEM). You would use your demo certificate and only send to the TSSF environment which is a closed/safe environment. This means your alert will not reach the public but allows you to exercise your capabilities, procedures, and processes. TSSF staff can monitor and verify alert receipt, or you can use the IPAWS Message Viewer:

https://messageviewer.demo.apps.fema.gov/ALERT_SERVICES/postedmessages.php?COGID=30XXXX

Where “30XXXX” is your unique test COG ID.



- If interested in assessing Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) effectiveness in the live environment, you may incorporate a live WEA using event code Required Weekly Test (RWT). Please see the IPAWS WEA Test Guidance Fact Sheet ([IPAWS Guidance - WEA Tests \(fema.gov\)](#)) for information. IPAWS TSSF staff can assist with planning and preparation of this option.
- There are methods to assess and evaluate live activation of EAS and NWEM but may be specific to your local EAS plan. Please contact the TSSF for further discussion.

Can IPAWS TSSF personnel help me plan and prepare?

Yes! The IPAWS TSSF team is knowledgeable and experienced with integration of IPAWS into FSTTL exercises. Personnel are readily available to assist with:

- Familiarization with IPAWS and the IPAWS TSSF for exercises ([IPAWS Process Playbook \(fema.gov\)](#))
- Planning and assistance with exercise objectives, MSEL injects, and scenarios
- Practice and pre-exercise initiatives to ensure understanding and preparation
- Recommendations to alert structure ([Guide for Constructing IPAWS WEA and EAS Messages \(fema.gov\)](#))
- Exercise conduct support (on-site or virtual)
- Verification of IPAWS alert(s) either to TSSF or live activation
- Exercise evaluation and input to after-action reports

The TSSF exercise support is not limited to the above-mentioned support and capabilities. Please contact us with your requirements and needs.

Additional resources, such as the Event Code Glossary and the Alert Standardization Checklist, can be found in the IPAWS Library [IPAWS Library | FEMA.gov](#).

The IPAWS Technical Support Services Facility is staffed 24/7 with subject-matter experts experienced in emergency management, public safety communications, public works, and broadcasting, ready to assist Alerting Authorities with IPAWS needs.

You can reach the TSSF at 1-84-IPAWSLAB or 1-844-729-7522. The number is answered during and after business hours. It will always be answered by the IPAWS TSSF answering service and routed to the appropriate staff. Email: Fema-ipaws-lab@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.

