

Minnesota Integrated Public Alert and Warning System - Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1 - January 2012

Published by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management



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At the request of the Commissioner of Public Safety an Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) committee has been formed under the State Radio Board (SRB). Ulie Seal, Chief of the Bloomington Fire Department and Bloomington's Emergency Manager, is the chair of this standing committee which is designed to bring together stakeholders in the alert and warning arena.

Welcome to the Minnesota Integrated Public Alert and Warning System newsletter!

Many of you have heard of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has developed and is in the process of rolling out at the federal level. This newsletter is being published to keep you informed about what is happening with alert and warning in the state of Minnesota.

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) will publish this newsletter on a monthly basis for the first six months of 2012 then bi-monthly thereafter.

What follows is a general overview outlining how we have arrived at this point.

In June of 2006, Presidential Executive Order 13407 was enacted to upgrade the nation's alert and warning capabilities. This assignment was given to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and tasked to FEMA. The IPAWS program was formed in 2008. In 2009 FEMA reached out to the Emergency Alert System (EAS) stakeholders on what needed to be done to improve alert and warning across the country.

In early 2010 a committee formed by HSEM commissioned a survey to query emergency managers and Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) supervisors on warning and notification

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systems. The survey results were reviewed by the committee which recommended waiting to see what came out of the launch of the FEMA IPAWS program before moving forward.

In the spring of 2011 another survey was sent out to broadcasters, cable and wire line providers in the state of Minnesota. The purpose of this survey was to get a “snapshot” of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) status in Minnesota.

[For a copy of the surveys listed above click here.](#)

In November 2011 the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) was conducted. Upon completion of the test HSEM did a follow up survey to gauge the success of the test.

Results from these surveys and research conducted by HSEM have resulted in a work plan for the IPAWS committee that lays the foundation for developing the next generation of alert and warning for Minnesota.

The work plan can be found in the [December SRB Agenda](#) starting on Page 146.

Over the next month the IPAWS Committee will convene and begin to work on alert and warning issues. Look for the committee web page on the SRB web site.

Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test



The test was conducted on November 9, 2011 at 1:00 PM central time. Many heard about it for months prior to the test (beginning in April of 2011) as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) conducted an outreach program with the EAS participants and state emergency management officials.

HSEM conducted a survey after the test for public input in three areas: what type of media they were tuned into, demographics (location by ZIP code, gender, age group), and comments about the test. The intent of the survey was to solicit public input about our national alert and warning program.

The survey opened on November 9, 2011 at 1 pm (the time of the test) and by the time it closed at midnight Saturday, November 12, 2011 there were 415 responses.

The survey results are posted at the following link:

<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/Documents/Minnesota%20Nationwide%20EAS%20Survey%20Results.pdf>

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FEMA IPAWS Independent Study Course



An independent, Web-based study course, [“IS-247 Effective Alert and Warning Messaging,”](#) has been released by FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute (EMI). This self-paced course is expected to take approximately two hours to complete and will include a final test covering the following topics:

- Introduction to IPAWS and some new terminology:
 - CAP (Common Alerting Protocol)
 - COG (Collaborative Operating Group)
 - CMAS (Commercial Mobile Alerting System)
- What are Appropriate, Effective and Accessible Alert and Warning Messages
- Common Alerting Protocol Message Composition (how it changes the way messages to the public are written)

The overall goal of the training is to ensure that warnings and alerts issued via the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) and National Weather Service

(NWS) dissemination services are necessary, timely and accurate.

Local government officials applying for IPAWS accounts on behalf of their organizations will be required to demonstrate successful completion of the course. They must also ensure that any other members of their organization who have system access to issue public alerts complete the training.

Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS)

The Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) provides the capability for authorized government agencies to send emergency alerts to citizens cell phones located in areas affected by an imminent threat.

Here are some quick facts about CMAS:

- The FCC requires that participating wireless carriers must begin deployment by April 2012.
- Alerts can only be sent using third party software via the IPAWS-OPEN system.
- Alerts that are sent can only be received by CMAS compatible cellular phones at this time.
- Only alerting authorities that have signed up for IPAWS and taken the online course will be able to use CMAS.

In the next the next issue we will cover;

- CMAS specifics
- When it is going to be in effect?
- How can I use it?
- What is the smallest area it can cover?
- What phones are compatible with CMAS?

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Next Issue:

COG (Collaborative Operating Group)

CMAS (Commercial Mobile Alerting System)

Contact Information and Resources

[Alert and Warning Page](#)

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