IPAWS - Messaging Guidance

Alert System (EAS or WEA) Checklist for Alert Originators

In general, the following conditions should be considered in determining whether the issuance of an EAS or a WEA is warranted:

EAS / WEA Activation Checklist

Yes　　No

____　　____　　Is this a sudden, unforeseen or unpredictable situation?

____　　____　　Does the situation pose an imminent threat to life or property?

____　　____　　Does the situation have the potential to adversely affect a significant population or geographic area?

____　　____　　Does the situation require that the public be told immediately to seek shelter or take other protective action?

____　　____　　Are other means of disseminating information inadequate to ensure rapid delivery of the information?

Important: Do not activate EAS or WEA if the answer to any of these questions is "No."

What are Public Alerts, Warnings and Notifications?

Type	Timeframe	Purpose	Examples
Warning	Prior to incidents.	Distribute guidance to prepare for an anticipated incident.	Weather watches/warnings, fire warnings, evacuation orders.
Alerts	At the beginning of and during incidents with ongoing, immediate threats.	Gain the attention of the public and draw their attention to a risk or hazard.	Active shooter and other dangers, hazardous materials concerns, 911 outages, AMBER alerts.
Notifications	During and after immediate threats.	Instruct immediate protective actions and provide ongoing communications relevant to an event to reduce milling and encourage public action. Convey time-sensitive information on response- and recovery-related services.	Protective actions, evacuation routes, boil-water advisories, return-from-evacuation notices, area-accessibility updates.

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Guidelines for Issuing Public Alert and Warnings

Situation	Distribution Method(s)	Recommended IPAWS Code	Message Circumstances
Life Safety High Priority, High Risk Incident	IPAWS - EAS IPAWS - WEA Mass Notification System Social Media Media Release	Civil Danger Warning (CDW)	• Active shooter • Dam breach • Large, escalating hazardous materials • Pipeline • Water supply contamination
Requiring Evacuation	IPAWS - EAS IPAWS - WEA Mass Notification System Social Media Media Release	Evacuation Immediate (EVI)	• Flooding • Dam breach • Hazardous materials • Wildfire
Requiring People to **Stay Where They Are**	IPAWS - EAS IPAWS - WEA Mass Notification System Social Media Media Release	Shelter-In-Place (SPW)	• Hazardous materials • Environmental health hazard (e.g. Air quality)
Priority Information	IPAWS - WEA Mass Notification System Social Media Media Release	Civil Emergency Message (CEM)	• 911 service disruption • Emergency closure of major roadways • No travel advised • Location of confirmed NWS-issued warnings
Priority Public Safety Information to **Follow Up on Previous Alert**	IPAWS - WEA Mass Notification System Media Release	Public Safety Message	• Awareness/Impact – Following NWS- issued alert (e.g. areas to avoid, detours) • Awareness/Impact – Following CEM (e.g. downed power lines, road closure, shelter locations)
Prepare for Expected Event/ Post-Event General Information	Mass Notification System Social Media Media Release	Electronic Telephone Notification (ETN)	• Community preparedness message • Town hall meeting • Generalized public safety message

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Five key elements of a message

Message Element	Element Description
Source	Who is the message from? Your citizens want to know if the message is from an authoritative source. Shorten the name of your organization when needed for messages with limited space (e.g. IPAWS 90-character legacy or SMS).
Hazard	What is the danger? While you can create a generic message, a specific template for the most common hazards in your area (e.g. floods, wildfires, boil-water alert, etc.) will be helpful. Include relevant location and time parameters in either the hazard or guidance description when needed.
Guidance	What should the recipient do? Be brief and use standardized words for guidance, as the code you choose does not show up in the message display in WEA automatically. Use words and phrases such as "evacuate," "take shelter," "shelter in place," and "check for updates" (if you are pointing them to a web page, etc.; if time permits, you can add more situation-specific information).
Location	Where is the hazard? When using this, you'll fill in a description of the place, using language the recipient will understand. **NOTE:** If using a polygon, do not exceed 10 polygons or 100 points, as it will cause your message to be rejected at the IPAWS OPEN Server. Square polygons are acceptable; the simpler, the better.
Termination Time	When is the hazard expected to be over or no longer relevant? This only applies when the information is available and you want to publish it in the message. You might also plan on using "unknown" to fill in a template. **Note:** WEA requires a termination time and cannot go past 24 hours.

Hazard Event Code

Event Code	Description
CDW	**Civil Danger Warning** — A warning of an event that presents a danger to a fraction of the civilian population. The CDW usually warns of a specific hazard and gives specific direction for protective action.
CEM	**Civil Emergency Message** — An emergency message regarding an in-progress or imminent significant threat(s) to public safety and/or property. The CEM hazard is less specific than the CDW.
EVI	**Immediate Evacuation** — A warning where immediate evacuation is recommended or ordered according to state law or local ordinance.
SPW	**Shelter in Place Warning** — A warning of an event where the public is encouraged to shelter in place (go inside, close doors and windows, turn off air conditioning or heating systems, and turn on the radio or TV for more information).

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Urgency, Severity and Certainty explained

The ones in red will trigger a WEA.

Urgency	Severity	Certainty
Immediate Responsive action should be taken immediately	**Extreme** Extraordinary threat to life or property	**Observed** Determined to have occurred or to be ongoing
Expected Responsive action should be taken soon (within next hour)	**Severe** Significant threat to life or property	**Likely** Likely (more than 50% chance)
Future Responsive action should be taken in the near future	**Moderate** Possible threat to life or property	**Possible** Possible but not likely (less than 50% chance)
Past Responsive action is no longer required	**Minor** Minimal to no known threat to life or property	**Unlikely** Not expected to occur

Response Type try to match this as much to your event as possible.

Response Code	Code Description
Evacuate	Relocate as per instructions
Prepare	Make preparations as per instructions
Execute	Execute a pre-planned activity as per instructions
Avoid	Avoid the subject event as per instructions
Monitor	Attend to information sources as per instructions
Access	Evaluate the information in the message
All Clear	The subject event no longer poses a threat or concern
None	No action recommended

WEA Category is part of the CAP 1.2 standards: use Safety as a default go to.

Category	Description
Geo	Geospatial (including landslides)
Met	Meteorological (including floods)
Safety	General Emergency and Public Safety Security: law enforcement, military and local security
Rescue	Rescue and recovery
Fire	Fire suppression and rescue
Health	Medical and public health
Env	Pollution and other environmental
Transportation	Public and private transportation
Infra	Utility, telecommunication , other non-transport infrastructure
CBRNE	Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive

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Changing Status

Be aware that all applications do not react the same if you update or cancel an alert; see the table below.

Action	WEA	EAS
New Alert	New alert is created. Repetitive broadcast begins and continues through indicated lifespan of the alert.	New alert traverses the system and is broadcast at all broadcast points at one time (no repetition).
Update	Broadcast for the referenced alert ceases, and alert text is updated.	New alert traverses the system and is broadcast at all broadcast points at one time (no repetition).
Cancel	Broadcast for the referenced alert ceases.	No action taken if the alert has already been broadcast.

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Tips for Text To Speech Messaging

Category	Correct	Incorrect
Age	42 to 45 years old 42 years old	40-45 42 yrs old
Height	5 feet 6 inches 5 foot 6	5 ft 6 in
Speed	Miles per hour	Mph
Temperature	-30 degrees Fahrenheit	-30 degrees (F)
Date	MM/DD/YYYY 02/12/2013 = February 12th, 2013	Only recognizes M-D-Y format.
Time	10:00 AM (PM) 10:00AM (PM)	1800 hours (avoid using the 24 hour clock; recipients may not understand this format.)
Weight	12 lbs (*must have a space*) 12 pounds	12lbs
Directions	North Northeast East Southeast South Southwest West Northwest	N NE E SE S SW W NW
License plate numbers	A B C 1 2 3 (must have a space between each character)	ABC123 ABC 123
Non-alphanumeric	Avoid special characters	
Addresses	1 4 2 2 5 1 4 2nd Street 5 0 6 2nd Street North 1 0 0 Ave. to 1 1 8 Ave. (requires period with Ave.) Use spaces between numbers. Be careful about dual-use abbreviations. St. = "Saint" rather than "Street." "506 2nd St. N" becomes "Five Hundred and Six, second Saint N". Minnesota Spell out words like Drive, Highway and State in full. Type out the full text to ensure proper pronunciation	14225 1 4 2nd Street 506 2nd Street N 100 Ave. to 118 Ave. (requires period with Ave.) Remember that numbers are spoken out in the tens and hundreds. So 12445 = twelve thousand four hundred forty five. MN
Telephone Numbers	7 8 0 – 9 8 0 – 8 7 5 8 9 1 1 Include spaces between each number.	780-980-8758 (Comes out seven hundred and eighty – nine hundred and eighty...) 911 (Comes out nine eleven)