

TO: Wisconsin County Emergency Management Directors
Wisconsin County Sheriffs
Wisconsin County 911 Center Directors

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RE: Participation Guidelines for *HAZCollect* EAS Alerts in Wisconsin

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HAZCollect is a program the National Weather Service (NWS) will be launching at the end of the 2007-08 winter or next spring. It gives local emergency services personnel the ability to initiate EAS alerts via their computer, for non-weather emergency messages (NWEM), which will be broadcast over the appropriate local NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) All Hazards stations. Possible alerts that come to mind are 911 telephone outages, hazardous material releases, evacuation warnings, and so on. These NWR EAS alerts will be heard directly by the public, as well as received by broadcasters and cable systems for relay to their audiences.

Who will be authorized to originate these alerts?

At least initially, *HAZCollect* alert origination is being limited to Wisconsin county-level agencies, and to major cities with an EOC separate from the county EOC.

Do I need to know which NWR stations I want the message broadcast on?

No, the system automatically converts your alert text into speech, and broadcasts your alert on all NWR stations serving the affected county.

How does my alert get transferred from the NWR system to all of the broadcasters and cable systems?

The NWR system gives the NWS an entry point into the broadcast EAS world. A special EAS code number is assigned to each county alert. All broadcast and cable stations have electronic boxes that are programmed to recognize these special EAS code numbers and re-broadcast or relay the alert.

What website will I need to connect to on my computer to send these alerts?

Currently, the only website with access to *HAZCollect* is a FEMA-administered site, called DMIS (Disaster Management Interoperability Services). There are near-future plans to allow access to *HAZCollect* through Wisconsin's E-Sponder program. (The DMIS website was started as a result of 9/11, to help local agencies communicate more effectively with each other. *HAZCollect* is just one of many software tools that can interact with DMIS.)

How do counties gain approval to send these alerts?

Becoming authorized for *HAZCollect* origination involves a multi-step process. Even though *HAZCollect* is not yet operational, you can complete Steps 1 – 3 right now. You will be notified via e-mail when *HAZCollect* becomes operational.

1. The county should pick one person to be the DMIS Administrator.
2. The county DMIS Administrator goes to the DMIS website (www.dmi-services.org) and submits a Registration Form. (On the DMIS home page, click on the “Register” button. Consult the DMIS 800-number or email address on that page for any questions regarding the DMIS registration process).
3. It will take FEMA about 2 weeks to verify your identity and assign you a “COG Name”. COG means, Collaborative Operations Group, the DMIS term that describes the group of users in your county that will be accessing DMIS. The county-level members of your county COG will be determined by the person you have designated as DMIS Administrator.
4. Once your DMIS COG name has been issued, your DMIS Administrator needs to contact the NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) that services your county. Contact information can be found at the end of these Participation Guidelines. Your WCM needs to know your COG name in order to approve your *HAZCollect* access request submitted in the next step.
5. Having received your DMIS COG name, you are now authorized to use the DMIS website. In order to have access to *HAZCollect*, you must register separately on an NWS website. After contacting your local WCM as described above, your DMIS Administrator should follow the HazCollect Registration procedure found at www.weather.gov/os/hazcollect
6. The request you submit on the *HAZCollect* website will be forwarded to your local WCM for approval. After that approval is sent back to DMIS, you will have access to *HAZCollect*.
7. While waiting for the above *HAZCollect* approval, the county DMIS Administrator can proceed with overseeing the downloading of DMIS software from the DMIS website onto all county computers that will be used for DMIS. (*HAZCollect* access requires DMIS software version 2.3.3 or later.) The county DMIS Administrator must then set up the accounts for all users in your COG. Care should be taken to grant *HazCollect* permission to only those county-level users the Administrator intends to have *HAZCollect* privileges. When DMIS gives *HAZCollect* approval to your COG, it is for the entire COG. The COG Administrator must further determine who actually has *HAZCollect* capabilities through the permissions granted in the user accounts.

How will I know if the approval process for my *HAZCollect* access has been completed?

To check if you have *HAZCollect* access, open the DMIS program on your computer and log in with your COG name. In the DMIS program, click on “DMI Services” choice at the top of the screen, then pick “Disaster Management Tools”, then pick “Alerts List”. At the top of the Alerts List screen, you should see a “New NWEM” button. If you don’t see this button, you are not yet authorized to send *HAZCollect* alerts. (Note: NWEM means Non-Weather Emergency Message, another name for *HAZCollect* alerts)

If I wait to begin this process until after *HAZCollect* is available through E-Sponder, will I still need to register with DMIS?

Yes, even after the alerts can be generated through E-Sponder, counties that have not already done so will still need to register with DMIS to receive a COG name for their access to be granted when using E-Sponder. E-Sponder users will not need to download the DMIS software, but they do need to make just the initial contact with DMIS in order to receive a COG name.

Are there any changes coming regarding the DMIS system?

Yes, in the near future the DMIS system will change from what is called a “thick client” to a “thin client” system. Right now, users must download a DMIS software program onto their computer to use the DMIS system; that is called a “thick client”. When DMIS transitions to a “thin client”, users will no longer need the DMIS software on their computer. Users will simply use their Internet browser to go to the DMIS website and all work will be done on the DMIS server end. In this way, any computer will be able to be used on DMIS, not just those with special software installed. The county DMIS Administrator should be sure to check in on the DMIS website to stay aware on when this change will take place.

Will my local broadcasters and cable operators automatically carry my alerts?

HAZCollect EAS Alerts will be received by all broadcast stations and cable systems in your area. However, the alert will not actually be re-broadcast to the public unless your local broadcasters and cable operators have programmed their EAS decoders to re-broadcast all of the non-weather EAS codes you may be sending. In order for your message to reach the public, you must contact your local broadcasters and cable operators now, to reach at least a verbal agreement with them that they will program their EAS decoders properly and carry your alerts. You may want to contact your regional EAS representative for additional information. To help broadcast stations and cable systems program their EAS units, refer them to Page 3 of the Wisconsin EAS Plan (www.sbe24.org/eas/). You may also want to suggest that your local broadcasters and cable operators monitor the local NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards signal directly if they are not doing so already, rather than receiving your alerts relayed through another source. This will help ensure the timely receipt of your emergency messages.

What kind of NWEMs can I generate & how do I decide which one to use for my emergency alert?

In Wisconsin, you can initiate thirteen (13) kinds of non-weather emergency alerts. They are listed and defined in the Wisconsin *HAZCollect* Oversight Committee By-Laws document. It will be up to the Incident Commander, County Sheriff, and County Emergency Management Director to collectively decide which alert fits the situation.

What criteria should I use to determine if a NWEM is warranted?

Generally, a NWEM is warranted if public safety is a critical issue, time is critical, and other dissemination or alert systems are not sufficient. The criteria are listed and defined in the Wisconsin *HAZCollect* Oversight Committee By-Laws document. The criteria must be adhered.

Where do I find the actual procedure to originate a *HAZCollect* alert using the DMIS software?

For step-by-step instructions on how to originate a *HAZCollect* alert, see Chapter 10 of the DMIS Operator’s Guide found on the DMIS website: www.dmi-services.org The Operator’s Guide is accessed by clicking the Web Services Release 2.3.3 “Click Here to Download” link.

Are there any requirements for emergency officials for participation in the *HAZCollect* program?

- Approved users are expected to follow the Activation Criteria, as established by the Wisconsin *HAZCollect* Oversight Committee By-Laws.

- For the benefit of all involved, all *HAZCollect* activations will be reviewed by the Wisconsin *HAZCollect* Oversight Committee. Officials who use *HAZCollect* for an EAS activation are expected to coordinate a mutually-agreeable time to review the activation with the Committee. Officials are encouraged to offer suggestions to improve the *HAZCollect* program as part of the review process.

Words of Caution

Emergency Services agencies have acquired a valuable and powerful new tool in gaining access to all area broadcasters and cable operators via the EAS. However, if not used prudently, you put yourself in danger of losing this tool. Broadcasters and cable operators are expecting the EAS to be used only for life-threatening emergencies.

Once the NWEM has been generated and transmitted into *HAZCollect*, it can't be stopped from tone-alerting the NWS system and interrupting all broadcast and cable stations. You must be absolutely sure you need to use the capabilities of *HAZCollect*.

Additionally, keep in mind two things. First, some broadcasters and cable operators have their EAS Decoders set on Automatic Mode. There is no one there to screen your message and decide if it should be aired. They are depending on you to only send an EAS Alert for a very serious emergency. The first time you trigger the system for a frivolous event, you will lose the confidence of your area broadcasters and cable operators. The second thing to remember is that broadcasters and cable operators participate in the local-level EAS on a voluntary basis. No one can force them to carry your EAS Alerts. Maintain a good relationship with your local broadcasters and cable operators, and they will come through for you.

Guidance and Contact Information for Using HAZCollect

Each of the five NWS offices that service Wisconsin will have a *HAZCollect* web page in the "Weather Safety" section of their web site. These participation guidelines can be found there, along with the By-Laws, PowerPoint presentations, and links to DMIS training. The telephone numbers listed in this document and the By-Laws will not appear on the NWS web sites since they are unlisted. The By-Laws document contains NWEM alert definitions, and important criteria for generating alerts.

Below is contact information:

NWS Office	WCM	E-mail	Web Site
Milwaukee	Rusty Kapela	rusty.kapela@noaa.gov	www.weather.gov/mkx
Green Bay	Jeff Last	jeff.last@noaa.gov	www.weather.gov/grb
La Crosse	Todd Shea	todd.shea@noaa.gov	www.weather.gov/arx
Minneapolis	Todd Krause	todd.krause@noaa.gov	www.weather.gov/mpx
Duluth	Carol Christenson	carol.christenson@noaa.gov	www.weather.gov/dlh

Below is a map showing which Wisconsin counties are serviced by the five NWS offices:

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