How Tribal Governments Can Sign Up For Public Alerts and Warnings

About the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System is a free internet-based tool that tribal officials can use to issue public alerts and warnings, such as severe weather alerts, to their jurisdiction. IPAWS allows tribes the capability to deliver a single alert simultaneously through multiple communication devices, reaching as many people as possible to save lives and protect property. These communication pathways include:

- ✓ Emergency Alert System (radio and television)
- ✓ Wireless Emergency Alerts (cell phones and mobile devices)
- ✓ National Weather Service Dissemination Services (NOAA Weather Radios)
- ✓ Legacy Systems (sirens, digital road signs, etc.)

How Can a Tribe Sign Up to Issue Alerts?

Step #1: Designate a Tribal Alerting Authority

Tribal elected officials may designate which public safety officials in their tribe are granted the authority to alert the public of emergency situations occurring in the tribe's jurisdiction. These officials will be the alerting authorities who sign up the tribe for access to the IPAWS and who will issue the alerts.

Step #2: Complete Web-based Training on IPAWS

To send an alert through IPAWS, public safety officials must complete the *IS-247a - Integrated Public Alert and Warning System* course, offered online through the Emergency Management Institute (http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-247.a). The online course is free, takes about two hours to complete, and is a prerequisite for full access to IPAWS for the purpose of public alerting. The tribe's primary alerting authority will be required to submit a copy of the completion certificate as part of the application process.

Step #3: Ensure Alerting Software Is IPAWS-Compatible

To send a message, the tribe must use its own alerting software that meets IPAWS system requirements. If a tribe does not already have compatible alerting software, it must acquire the software. There are commercial products that are available or in development (http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=5670).

Funding: There is no cost to send messages through IPAWS, but there may be costs associated with acquiring compatible software. Tribes may want to consider sharing the cost of software and/or equipment with mutual aid organizations, neighboring jurisdictions or nearby public or private sector installations that would also benefit from an enhanced alerting system. Funding may also be available through the DHS/FEMA Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program to enhance existing or purchase new alert and warning systems: http://www.fema.gov/preparedness-non-disaster-grants

Step #4: Sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FEMA

Tribal governments interested in sending alerts through IPAWS must request an agreement with FEMA IPAWS governing system security. The agreement application can be found on the IPAWS website (http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/112266). Return the completed form to ipaws@fema.dhs.gov. FEMA will prepare a custom agreement and provide additional setup instructions to the tribe.

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Step #5 – Coordinate with State Governments on Public Alerting Permissions

FEMA recommends that Tribal governments coordinate with state governments, as appropriate, to exchange information about the types of alerts they intend to issue, as well as the extent of their geographic warning area based on Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) codes. FIPS codes uniquely identify counties and county equivalents. This will ensure that tribal public alerting permissions coordinate with state alerting plans and duly adopted operational plans.

What's Next?

Once all of the above steps have been completed, you will be notified by FEMA via e-mail that you are enabled to send alerts to the public.

Technical Assistance

A point of contact from the FEMA IPAWS office will be assigned to assist you and answer questions throughout the application process.

For general assistance on using or applying for IPAWS, please e-mail ipaws@fema.dhs.gov or visit http://www.fema.gov/ipaws. Additional fact sheets on how to use and sign up for IPAWS can be found at http://www.fema.gov/informational-materials.