

California Jurisdiction

Local Alert and Warning Plan



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This is a sample Local Alert and Warning Plan for a hypothetical California Jurisdiction.

This document supports the Jurisdiction Emergency Operations Plan.

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PURPOSE

The Local Alert and Warning Plan establishes guidelines for the use of California Jurisdiction's alert and warning program in partnership with the cities within Jurisdiction A and the surrounding counties, Jurisdiction B and Jurisdiction C. The alert and warning program provides public notification of protective actions to take before, during, and after threats or emergencies and to disseminate messages to community members, including individuals with disabilities and people with access or functional needs that may require additional time to evacuate or may be at greater risk of harm without notification. This document supports the California Jurisdiction Emergency Operations Plan.

POLICY

This policy establishes appropriate use of the California Jurisdiction alert and warning program. Each jurisdiction within the broader jurisdiction is responsible for preparing for a disaster, including establishing methods for alerting and warning the public, mobilizing resources, and initiating protective actions. Participating jurisdictions expressly agree to activate the California Jurisdiction alert and warning program when an incident threatens life or property, participants can use the jurisdiction's alert and warning program to disseminate protective action instructions to affected populations.

AUTHORITY

Emergency Alert System (EAS) rules are governed by 47 CFR § 11.1, *et seq.* The EAS provides the President with the capability to provide immediate communications and information to the general public at the National, State and Local Area levels during periods of national emergency.

LOCAL ALERT AND WARNING PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The California Jurisdiction Alert and Warning Program Advisory Committee is a jurisdiction-wide organization composed of participating city and jurisdiction agency representatives. Maintained and led by the California Jurisdiction alert and warning program Administrator, the committee shall meet semi-annually or more frequently as established by the committee. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to conduct after action reviews of the system usage, coordinate ongoing administration, training, public outreach, modifications to policies and guidelines, protocols, or other issues related to the alert and warning program.

All recommendations for substantive changes to the alert and warning program shall be submitted to the appropriate committee/council.

LOCAL ALERT AND WARNING PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS

The California Jurisdiction alert and warning program:

- Contains tools for accessing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).
- Contains a variety of tools to communicate with the public during emergencies. Consideration should be made to include tools that allow operators to geo-target alerts to residents in the affected area of the emergency.
- Coordinates with all Alerting Authorities within an Operational Area, and Operational Areas within same Local EAS Plan.
- Contains features for cancelling and revoking accidental alerts, and for rapidly correcting and updating alert details.
- Considers the access or functional needs community who may require additional time to act.
- Considers geographic gaps in communication availability within the community and hazards and threats most likely to affect the local community.

California Jurisdiction administers the Local Alert and Warning Program. Maintenance, user training, exercises, and testing shall be coordinated through the California Jurisdiction Alert and Warning Program Administrator. For detailed instructions on accessing the system, see the alert and warning program user's manual.

PROCEDURES

Coordination of Notifications

All participating agencies shall work to coordinate efforts when using the alert and warning program. All jurisdiction departments, cities, and other departments are required to sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) governing the use and cooperative sharing of the alert and warning program resource. Alert and warning notifications that extend across multiple jurisdictions shall be communicated and coordinated with the impacted and neighboring jurisdictions.

Authorized Users

System access and authorization to send broadcasts is the responsibility of the designated and authorized mass notification Alerting Authority from each participating jurisdiction. Each Alerting Originator shall:

- Have his/her own password.
- Not share passwords.
- Ensure passwords meet stringent security measures.
- Changed their password every 90 days.
- Understand the implications of alerting vs. NOT alerting.
- Not exceed their authority in use of the system.
- Log off the system before leaving their workstation.

System Training

All system users must receive proper training in the use of the alert and warning program, which includes alerting for individuals with access and functional needs. Once the training is completed, authorization to access the system shall be granted based upon the level of training received and the authorization level required for messaging. The California Jurisdiction alert and warning program Administrator shall maintain training and access of authorized system users.

Allocation of Sufficient Resources

Adequate staffing and resources to operate the alert and warning program in an effective manner must be scalable and based on the risk analysis within the Emergency Plan. A minimal level of staffing level *is to be maintained to ensure the availability of a trained operator* to operate the alert and warning program at all times.

Staffing Availability

A Duty Officer shall be on-call 24/7 and available to activate emergency alerts. If the Duty Officer cannot be reached, the County Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) shall contact the designated back-up alerting originator. Anyone designated to send alerts must have knowledge of access and functional need requirements.

System Redundancy

The system shall be available 24/7, and accessible from any location, including out-of-jurisdiction locations. If the primary system is not available, the County

shall utilize a backup system – or the designated neighboring jurisdiction with whom they have an agreement – to execute notifications.

Exercises

As a shared goal, the jurisdiction shall participate in one or more annual exercise to test the collaboration, coordination, system proficiency, integration, knowledge of jurisdictional partners, and whole community stakeholders. Individual municipalities, departments, and group managers may “exercise” the system so long as their tests are conducted in a manner consistent with proper system testing procedures.

Required Testing

Required system testing includes:

- Receipt and re-transmission of a Required Monthly Test (RMT) based on Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requirement.
- National Period Test. FEMA will schedule the National Periodic Test yearly.
- Missed Tests. Check for IPAWS open connectivity.
- Test Codes. Time duration and jurisdiction location codes.
- Test Formats and Scripts. Required weekly test announcements and visual messages.
- Test accessibility and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.

The jurisdiction shall maintain a redundant system capability through either separate back-up system or a partnership with neighboring jurisdiction(s).

NOTIFICATIONS

The Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) is an international standard required for IPAWS messages. All emergency messages distributed through the alert and warning program shall be formatted using CAP, whether or not IPAWS is used to disseminate the message.

Delivery of Presidential alerts and nationwide, monthly, and weekly tests shall be performed. EAS alerts are delivered to EAS Participants over the internet, from FEMA's IPAWS gateway, or by over-the-air broadcast.

The agency sending the message is responsible for managing the questions, comments, and/or concerns arising from the message.

Pre Message Coordination

Inform all critical stakeholders of the notification contents and implications prior to full message dissemination, as feasible, while maintaining timely notification under emergency situations. Use message templates to ensure consistency of content delivery and use checklists when informing critical stakeholders.

Post Message Coordination

Evaluate whether or not another message is warranted, if clarification is needed, or “message fatigue” is occurring.

Prohibited use include:

- Unauthorized disclosure of personal data contained within the system.
- Manipulation or usage of system or data beyond ascribed user level.
- Any usage beyond the scope as outline in this policy, or in participating jurisdictions' policy or MOU.

Emergency Use

Emergency use covers incidents where life or property is threatened, and responders need affected community members to take immediate protective actions.

During such periods, proactively delivering emergency messages is critical. The nature of the incident and directions from authorized public safety officials shall dictate the specific protective action instructions for a given incident or event that is communicated to the community.

The jurisdiction's alert and warning Alerting Authority shall determine whether the alert and warning program should be activated. The Alerting Authority may designate Authorized Users in the jurisdiction with pre-approval to disseminate emergency messages using the alert and warning program.

Emergency messages should be sent in the most targeted manner possible to avoid “alerting fatigue” of unaffected members of the public.

Individuals with access or functional needs often require more time and resources to act (including securing accessible transportation and evacuation resources) before, during, and after disasters. Therefore, providing the whole community with accessible, timely information throughout the emergency lifecycle is essential. Failure to do so places individuals with access and functional needs at greater risk of losing their life, safety, security, and

independence. Considerations include accessible and actionable messages, time needed to act on alert or warning messages, types of events warranting alert or warning, and establishing inclusive communication strategies and networks.

When appropriate, follow-up notifications should be broadcast through the emergency alerting system to provide the impacted community with critical updates or changes to the message, or to notify them that the emergency has concluded.

When an evacuation order has been lifted, consideration should be given to the scale of the incident and the number of evacuees. In an effort to minimize confusion and ensure an organized reentry process, other available means of disseminating this information should be strongly considered.

Non-Emergency Use

The alert and warning program may be used to disseminate non-emergency information only to community members who have opted-in to receive this information.

Each authorized System Administrator is responsible for determining the non-emergency (opt-in) messaging groups that their jurisdiction shall make available to community members.

PRIVACY

Each member jurisdiction shall preserve and protect the integrity and privacy of personal data collected for use in the alert and warning program.

No personal data shall be disseminated or extracted from master records, nor shall reports produced as part of the jurisdiction's alert and warning program be used for purposes other than mass notification.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

While an After-Action Report is recommended for all emergency notifications, it is only required when a City, County, or City and County proclaim a local emergency and a state of emergency is declared by the Governor. The Jurisdiction's Disaster Preparedness Coordinator shall be responsible for

completing and forwarding the report to the jurisdiction's Board of Supervisors and Sheriff, and the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services within 90-days after the close of the incident as defined under the California Code of Regulations, Title 19, section 2900(q).

TERMINOLOGY

Alert – Refers to any text, voice, video, or other information provided by an authorized official to provide situational awareness to the public about a potential or ongoing emergency that may require actions to protect life, health, and property. Communication intended to draw the attention of recipients to some previously unexpected or unknown condition or event.

IPAWS – Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. Organized by FEMA. Once the alert is received from the alerting authorities, the IPAWS authenticates the alert source and then validates that the alert input conforms to the common alerting protocol standards and the IPAWS profile.

Notification – Refers to any process where Federal, State, local, tribal, and nongovernmental organization, department, and/or agency employees are informed of an emergency that may require a response from those identified. Communication intended to inform recipients of a condition or event for which contingency plans are in place.

Warning – Refers to any text, voice, video, or other information provided by an authorized official to provide direction to the public about an ongoing emergency that requires actions to protect life, health, and property. Communication that encourages recipients to take immediate protective actions appropriate to some emergent hazard or threat.

Whole Community – Individuals and families, including those with access and functional needs.