

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

What is the Emergency Alert System (EAS)?

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system that requires broadcasters, cable TV, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio services (SDARS) and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers to provide the President with capability to address the American people within 10 minutes during a national emergency.

The system also may be used by state and local authorities, in cooperation with broadcasters, to deliver emergency information, such as weather alerts, AMBER alerts and incident information targeted to specific areas.

FEMA, in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is responsible for implementation, maintenance and operations of the EAS at the federal level. The President has sole responsibility for determining when the national level EAS will be activated. FEMA is responsible for national-level EAS, tests, and exercises.

EAS Modernization and Primary Entry Point (PEP) Stations

The modernization of the EAS begins with the FEMA adoption of a new digital standard for distributing alert messages to broadcasters. The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) uses the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) standard and new distribution methods to make EAS more resilient and enhance its capabilities.

Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations are broadcast stations located throughout the country with a direct connection to FEMA and resilient transmission capabilities. These stations provide the initial broadcast of a Presidential EAS message. FEMA increased the number of PEP facilities to cover more than 90 percent of the American people.

History of the Emergency Alert System (EAS)

In 1951 CONTROL of ELECTromagnetic RADiation, originally called the “Key Station System” or CONELRAD, initiated a procedure on participating stations tuned to 640 & 1240 kHz AM designed to warn citizens. In 1963 the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) was initiated to provide audible alerts. It did not allow for targeted messaging.

In 1997 the Emergency Alert System (EAS) was designed for the President to speak to the American people in a national emergency. EAS messages contain a digitally encoded header, attention signal, audio announcement and digitally encoded end-of-message marker.

The EAS Remains a Critical Component of IPAWS

In 2006, President Bush signed Executive Order 13407 directing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create a comprehensive public alert and warning system for the United States. FEMA was directed to lead the effort and adopted a set of standards and protocols which support IPAWS.

IPAWS is a modernization and integration of the nation’s existing and future alert and warning systems, technologies and infrastructure. Federal, state, territorial, tribal and local government alert and warning systems can integrate with the national infrastructure, providing a broader range of options and pathways for the delivery of alert and warning messages by providing one message over more media to more people for preservation of life and property.



FEMA

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For more information visit <https://www.fema.gov/ipaws>. Contact the IPAWS Program Management Office at ipaws@fema.dhs.gov.

IPAWS is a national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency alert and information messaging to the public through cell phones and internet applications using Wireless Emergency Alerts, and to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System.