FEMA is developing the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) to meet requirements for an alert system as specified by an executive order issued by President George W. Bush.

In response to the Warning, Alert, and Response Network Act, or WARN Act, signed into law (Title VI of P.L. 109-347), the FCC worked with commercial mobile service providers to create a Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) that would be able to relay alerts through cell phones.
Interfacing the Wireless AMBER Alerts System with the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

Agencies Involved with CMAS planning

The agencies involved in the initial discussions and planning:
1. FCC
2. FEMA
3. CTIA (Wireless Industry)
CMAS versus WEA

• The Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are the same.
• PLAN (Personal localized Alerting Network)

Great Ten minute video to explain CMAS:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVhX_SbVxnY

Transition

• Wireless AMBER Alerts Program terminated December 31, 2012

• Replaced by the Wireless Emergency Alerts Program

WAA versus WEA

• WEA Compliant cell phones

Benefits

• Cell Tower driven versus Zip Code Driven
• Opt-Out versus Opt-In
Lessons Learned

• Loud Annoying tone
  – Unknown this would take place
• Lack of meaningful information
  – Limited 90 Character limitations
• Ability to reach much larger audience
• Lack of Public Education
  – Public confusion

Loud Tone

• Same tone used for EAS messages on Radio and TV
• Regulated by the FCC
  – The tone associated with CMAS alerts is specified “by the ATIS/TIA J-STD-100 as well as FCC 47 CFR Part 10.”
• Vibrate / Silent mode
• FEMA engineers working to change but needs to be approved by Wireless Standards committee.
Loud Tone

• When an AMBER Alert was activated around 2 am there were many complaints that resulted.
  – Noise was described as startling and lacked meaningful information
• Consideration should be given to NO CMAS between 10 pm and 6 am or any time where benefit is questionable.

Ability to Turn Off
Every Carrier is different

Lack of meaningful information

• We are limited to 90 Characters
  – Includes spaces
  – No phone numbers
  – No URL’s or links
  – No pictures
• This places severe limitations on the ability to convey meaningful information and avoid confusion.
Cell Broadcast

- The alerts are sent on a special wireless carrier channel called Cell Broadcast, therefore not affected by congestion on the voice or SMS text channels.
- Transmitted simultaneously to all mobile devices within range of the cellular carrier towers in the affected area.
- Example

Lack of meaningful information

- Thought process: Use same rationale as used for the DOT signs
  - Message sent only if there is a plate number
  - If there is no plate number. Generic vehicle information sent would confuse everyone.
  - NOTE: Generic information is not helpful, it promotes generic calls and leads that are meaningless

Lack of meaningful information

- Thought process: Use same rationale as used for the DOT signs
  - Tallahassee, FL AMBER Alert LIC/AT42794 (TX)
    (2005) Silver GMC Envoy (this is 69 characters)
  - No Updates sent
  - Cancellation sent to FEMA and Cell Towers but not to cell phones
Ability to reach much larger Audience

- Remember, this Alert is not requested by the subscriber, but automatically sent.
  - May be new or vacationing in the area
- Consideration MUST be given to the range requested for these alerts
- AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution can be requested Statewide, and CMAS to a much smaller defined area.

How do we notify NCMEC?
We receive AMBER Alerts by many methods.

- Email: amberalerts@ncmec.org
- Fax: 703-224-2127
- EmNet:
  - NOTE that while we receive these messages they do NOT list the EAS regions for NCMEC
- AmberAlert.com
- MyStateUSA
- NCIC and Nlets

What should we list in the request?

- Make sure it is clear if you want CMAS…
  - Please keep us informed exactly how you want your AMBER Alerts disseminated.
- Make sure the range of CMAS is clear to NCMEC… Regions versus entire State
- Secondary Distribution and CMAS can be different
Lack of Public Education

• FAQ’s for transition
  – www.ctia.org/tea

• FEMA is working on a campaign with the Ad Council
  – No timeline at this point, more info to follow
  – Past experience indicates Ad Council places ads off hours like 2 or 3 in the morning

Lack of Public Education

• DOJ and NCMEC have been in contact with FEMA and CTIA to develop immediate, short term and long term solutions
• FEMA is developing educational webinars and FAQ’s
  – Unknown timeframe at this point

Links to FAQ’s and Information

FEMA:
• http://www.fema.gov/commercial-mobile-alert-system

DOJ:
• http://www.amberalert.gov/

CTIA:
• http://www.ctia.org/consumer_info/safety/index.cfm/AID/12082
Lack of Public Education

- DOJ and NCMEC have recommended boilerplate packages be sent to all AMBER Coordinators and Clearinghouses to be posted on their websites.
- We are recommending this be done in concert with Emergency Management

Questions?

[Contact information for National Center for Missing & Exploited Children]