



ROBERT GARCIA
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SOUNDING THE ALARM:

Lessons from the Kenneth Fire False Alerts

May 12, 2025





Association Press photo of Kenneth Fire

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2025, a false Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) was mistakenly sent to nearly 10 million residents across Los Angeles County during the Kenneth Fire, causing widespread public confusion and alarm. Intended to warn only those in the immediate danger zone, near Calabasas and Agoura Hills, the alert instead reached the entire county due to a failure within Genasys Inc.'s alerting software.

In addition, many residents reported receiving the false alert multiple times or after it had been cancelled. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) found these duplicate or delayed messages were not caused by downed cell towers, as initially believed, but by other technical issues. One major wireless provider experienced equipment overload, and the lack of unique alert identifiers—combined with long alert duration settings and network hand-offs—caused some devices to mistakenly reprocess or re-display the same alert.

Following oversight requests by Members of Congress representing Los Angeles County, this report prepared by Congressman Robert Garcia outlines the findings of a Congressional oversight investigation into the causes, impacts, and systemic vulnerabilities that led to the erroneous alert. The investigation revealed technical flaws in third-party software, insufficient warning mechanisms for missing location data, and broader issues with alert messaging clarity.

Key policy recommendations include improved federal funding for local alerting infrastructure, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should provide enhanced training and certification for Alert Originators, standardization of third-party software, implementation of location-aware maps in WEA messages, and finalization of FCC performance standards. These measures are necessary to restore public trust in emergency communications and ensure alerts are accurate, timely, and targeted.

EMERGENCY ALERTS

Following Hurricane Katrina, pursuant to Executive Order 13407, signed by President George W. Bush, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) created the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) to create an “effective, reliable, integrated, flexible, and comprehensive communications system to alert and warn” the public.

Congress has provided statutory support for IPAWS, authorizing the inclusion of wireless devices in 2006;¹ codifying several elements of Executive Order 13407 and improving the system's resiliency and security in 2016;² and requiring FEMA to develop mandatory minimum requirements for state and local IPAWS users in 2019.³



FEMA operates and maintains this IP-based network alerting system, which can be used by the President to send nationwide emergency alerts, and by state, local, tribal, and territorial public safety entities that need to communicate an emergency alert locally, like Los Angeles County, by connecting them to the nationwide communications networks capable of delivering these alerts to impacted public audiences.



(Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA])

IPAWS enables the simultaneous distribution of a single emergency alert across multiple communication networks. It authenticates, validates, and distributes alerts through various communication pathways, including:

- Television and radio alerts (Emergency Alert System or EAS)
- Wireless text message alerts (Wireless Emergency Alerts or WEA)
- NOAA National Weather Radio (NWR)
- Internet-based systems (e.g., outdoor digital signs)

1. Warning, Alert, and Response Network Act (Title VI of P.L. 109-347)

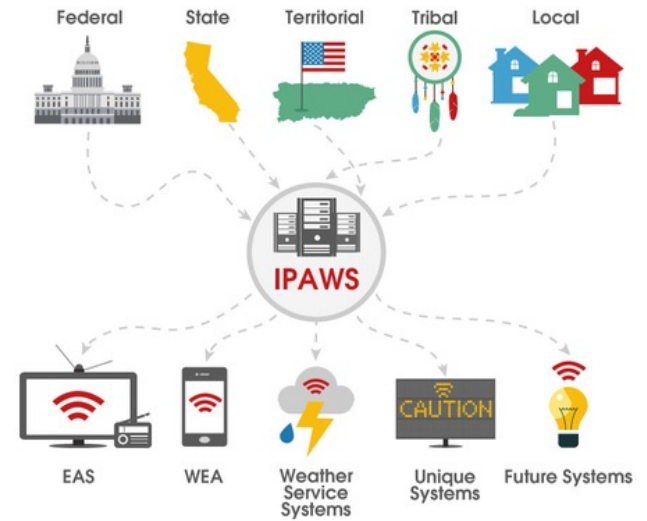
2. IPAWS Modernization Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-143)

3. Section 1756 of the FY20 National Defense Authorizing Act (P.L. 116-92)

FEMA manages the nationwide activations, tests, and exercises of IPAWS, and ensures the functionality of WEA and EAS communication pathways.

The FCC establishes and enforces operational rules for wireless alerts and defines technical requirements and rules for participating wireless carriers.⁴

In 2024, over 600 unique agencies around the country used IPAWS to send more than 16,000 alerts.⁵



(California Governor's Office of Emergency Services [CalOES])

ALERTING AUTHORITIES & THIRD-PARTY SOFTWARE

Local public safety agencies are certified by FEMA to become Alerting Authorities, which can use FEMA's IPAWS system to send alerts. Agencies must complete proficiency demonstrations, and practice monthly. There are 1,963 Alerting Authorities throughout the U.S., including 28 in Los Angeles County alone.

Alerting Authorities purchase and use third-party commercial software, known as Alert Origination Software Providers (AOSP), to assist the Alerting Authority in targeting populations and accessing the IPAWS system to send alert messages. There are over 40 different commercial providers in the market, each with their own unique features and interfaces; and they must all be certified by FEMA.⁶

Los Angeles County uses Genasys Inc.'s software systems to coordinate emergency protective actions, issue emergency alerts and warning messages, and support communicating emergency information to the public.

LA WILDFIRE FALSE ALERTS

Between January 7 and January 27, 2025, state and local California Alerting Authorities used IPAWS to send over 146 alerts to the public.⁷

The Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (LACOEM), Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and other jurisdiction partners used Genasys' EVAC software system to map zones which may require protective action.⁸

4. Congressional Research Service, "The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS): Primer and Issues for Congress"

5. March 3, 2025, Response by FEMA Acting Associate Administrator, Office of National Continuity Programs to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

6. March 3, 2025, Response by FEMA Acting Associate Administrator, Office of National Continuity Programs to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

7. March 3, 2025, Response by FEMA Acting Associate Administrator, Office of National Continuity Programs to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

8. April 1, 2025, Response by Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

LACOEM then takes the targeted areas developed in Genasys' EVAC software and inputs that targeted geographic area in Genasys' ALERT software, which is used to send out the alert messages over multiple channels, including IPAWS, to the specified areas of concern.

IPAWS WEA messages use standardized formatting, and in 2019, the FCC expanded messages from 90 to 360 characters (for 4G LTE network technology and beyond).

CAP WEA Handling Code:

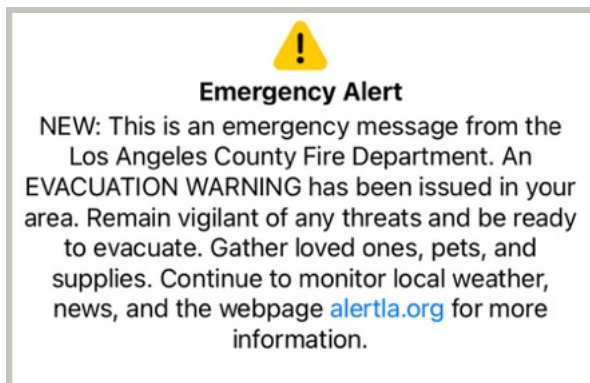
Language	90 WEA Text	360 WEA Text
English	This is a test of the 90 character wireless emergency alert.	This is a test of the wireless emergency alert system. This message contains 360 characters which will provide more information to the public in time of an emergency. This is only a test.
Spanish	Esta es una prueba de 90 caracteres del Sistema de Alertas Inalambricas de Emergencia	Esta es una prueba del Sistema de Alertas Inalambricas de Emergencia. Este mensaje contiene 360 caracteres para asi proveer al publico mas informacion en casos de emergencia. Esta es una prueba. No tome accion.

Example of Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) messages (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA])

On January 9, 2025, LACOEM used Genasys' system to send multiple alerts throughout the day for different areas of the County impacted by concurrent, active fires.

At 3:46 p.m., LACOEM began drafting an evacuation warning message intended for individuals near Calabasas, Agoura Hills, and the West Hills community in the western San Fernando Valley, which were under threat from the Kenneth Fire.⁹

However, when the message was sent at 3:56 p.m., instead of being delivered to just the intended area under threat from the Kenneth Fire, the message was mistakenly delivered throughout the entire Los Angeles County. Thus, nearly 10 million people across the County received this alert:¹⁰



Los Angeles Office of Emergency Management Wireless Emergency Alert

Further complicating the situation, many residents continued to receive the incorrect evacuation warning throughout the night and the following day, including in the early morning, and some receiving alert messages multiple times.¹¹

9. March 27, 2025, Response by Genasys Inc Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

10. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/16/us/evacuation-warnings-vulnerabilities-la-fires/index.html>

11. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-09/emergency-alert-text-message-los-angeles-fire>

IMPACT

To protect life and property during emergencies, appropriately timed, targeted, and understandable emergency alert messages can mean the difference between life and death. However, unclear messages, sent to the wrong locations, multiple times, and after the emergency has passed, can lead to alert fatigue and erosion of public trust. Due to the incorrect warning, millions who were never under any wildfire danger were unnecessarily alarmed and confused, causing distress in a dangerous time of out-of-control wildfires.

This had serious implications for public safety and well-being at a time of intense distress for our community. Further, the incident raises a serious risk that future alerts could be ignored or downplayed by more recipients, putting lives at risk.

CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION

On February 3, 2025, Congressman Robert Garcia (CA-42) and thirteen Members of Congress representing Los Angeles County sent oversight letters seeking answers regarding the erroneous evacuation warnings.

Letters were addressed to:

- Genasys, Inc., the software company used by the County for mapping targets and issuing Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)
- Los Angeles County
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

All four entities responded to the oversight letters by the requested deadline of April 1, 2025.¹²

KEY FINDINGS

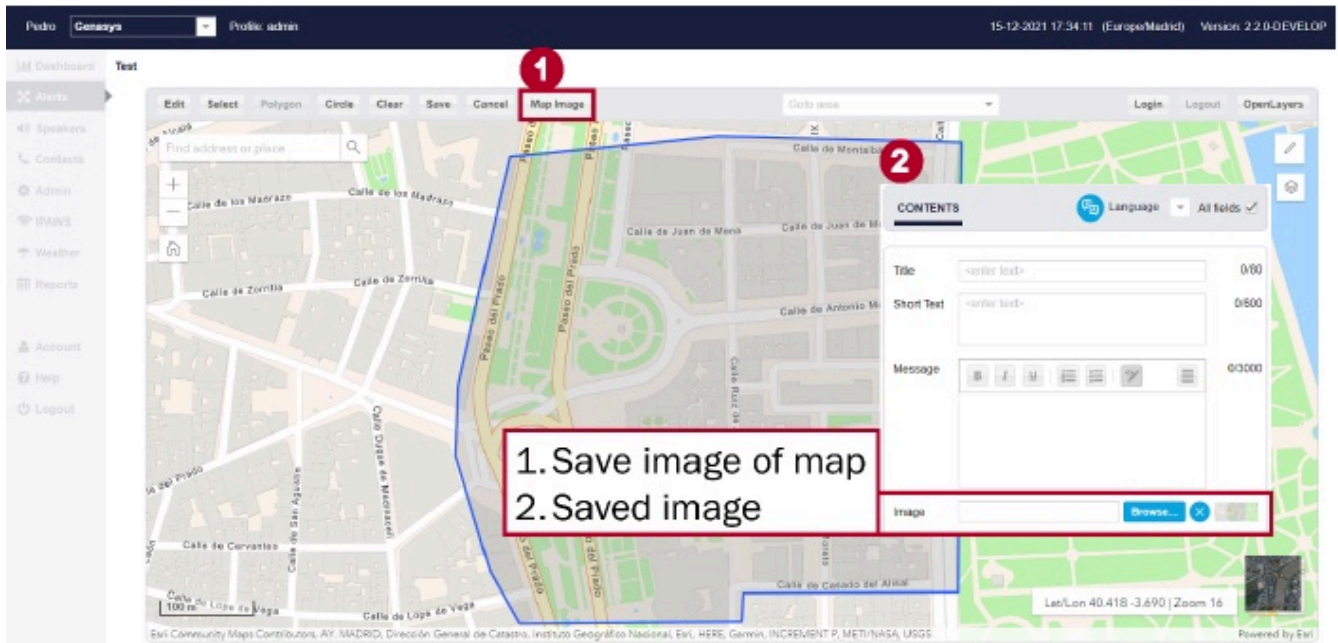
1. The initial false alert is believed to be caused by technology issues with third-party technology vendor Genasys.

In sending an alert, an Alert Originator designates a broad geographic area (geocode), like a county, where they have permission to send alerts. Within this geocode, a more precise geographic area (polygon) can be used to target alerts to only the area impacted by the threat.



From latimes.com

12. <https://robertgarcia.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-robert-garcia-leads-los-angeles-county-members-demand-answers>



(Genasys Inc.)

On January 9, 2025, LACOEM used Genasys' EVAC software to designate a polygon specific to the area under threat from the Kenneth Fire.

According to Genasys' internal investigation, LACOEM's Alert Originator input the correct Kenneth Fire-area polygon into Genasys' ALERT system, and the geocode (Los Angeles County in this case) was auto-populated across all channels.

The correct Kenneth Fire-area polygon was saved in different channels for SMS, voice calls, emails, TTY (teletype for the hearing impaired), and Genasys' mobile PROTECT App.

However, the correct Kenneth Fire-area polygon was NOT saved into the IPAWS wireless channel in the Genasys system, and the operator did not realize the polygon was missing. Genasys believes this may be due to a network disruption, but did not explain the source of the network disruption.¹³

GEM Manual Vs 3.7

IPAWS Log Details	
Block Channel	Wear Handling
Id	Identifier
Sender	Sent
Scope	Category
Event	Response Type
Urgency	Severity
Certainty	Geocodes
Area Description	Polygon
Sound File	
Headline	
Description	
Instruction	
WEA Text	

(Genasys Inc.)

13. March 27, 2025, Response by Genasys Inc Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

Genasys' system showed the alert message was in "ready" status and able to be sent—there was a geocode (Los Angeles County) in the IPAWS channel, and IPAWS allows a message to be disseminated county-wide with just a geocode.

The LACOEM Alert Originator had properly input the polygon into the system; but was not alerted by the Genasys' system that the polygon wasn't saved in the IPAWS channel.

The Genasys system did not warn the Alert Originator that it did not have a polygon (Kenneth Fire area) in the IPAWS channel, and the message would be sent county-wide; and gave no indication that the IPAWS channel was missing the targeted polygon, despite it being present in the other alert distribution channels.

It should be noted that Los Angeles County's response does not discuss network issues or the lack of an uploaded polygon, instead noting "This error was unable to be duplicated, but Genasys reported that the issue was traced to the version 2 ("/v2") user interface of the Genasys system," and "While the error was unable to be duplicated, additional safeguards were put into place."

Genasys has since updated its software to include a warning to the user that the alert has a geocode but no polygon and will go county-wide before sending the alert; and now if the other distribution channels have polygon targeting, it will ensure the IPAWS channel also includes that polygon geographic targeting.¹⁴

The independent after-action review by the McChrystal Group, ordered by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, may want to further investigate Genasys' claims of what caused the error, and how a network disruption would have occurred or could have blocked the proper upload of a polygon into the IPAWS distribution channel.

2. LA County noticed the error quickly and acted immediately to stop the message and send a correction.



*Los Angeles Office of Emergency Management Wireless
Emergency Alert*

Almost immediately, LACOEM noticed the message was sent county-wide in error, and cancelled the alert 2 minutes and 47 seconds later.¹⁵

Twenty minutes after the false alert, LACOEM issued a new alert, noting the error in the initial message and clarifying the evacuation warning was meant only to apply to the Kenneth Fire evacuation area.¹⁶

14. March 27, 2025, Response by Genasys Inc Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

15. March 27, 2025, Response by Genasys Inc Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

16. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-09/emergency-alert-text-message-los-angeles-fire>

As the County worked with Genasys and federal partners to understand what caused the error, the next day on January 10, 2025, Los Angeles County temporarily switched from sending messages via the Genasys system to having the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) use their emergency alert and warning system, OnSolve CodeRed,¹⁷ to send local alert notifications for the County. Los Angeles County moved back to using Genasys on January 30, 2025.¹⁸

3. Los Angeles County could improve the wording of alert messages.

FEMA's IPAWS Best Practices Guide recommends the text of alert messages include six key information elements:¹⁹

The Kenneth Fire message, which accidentally went county-wide, could have been better written to convey relevant information which could have improved an understanding of the nature of the danger.

Message Content	Description
Source	Use local, familiar, trusted sources. Spell it out completely (no acronyms).
Hazard	Provide the name of the hazard for which the warning is being sent. Be as specific as you are able to be about the type of threat affecting the population.
Hazard Impact	Describes the impacts that may occur as a result of the threat and the reasons that a person should take protective action.
Location	Use familiar landmarks and known physical boundaries in addition to city/county names. In some cases, location includes where people should go as well as the areas affected.
Protective Action Guidance	Tell people what they can do to protect themselves. Be specific and instructive about how to take action. Also, tell them when actions need to be taken.
Expiration Time	Most warnings will not include an expiration time, but some will. If you do not include an expiration time, tell people where to get more information about the hazard and how they will learn that conditions are safe.

(Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA])

Los Angeles County may have avoided damage to people outside the impacted Kenneth Fire area had their message included more information on the location or the timing of the danger. This additional information is also important for people who have older phones, where geotargeting is not precise on those devices.

A more precise description of the affected area could have been accomplished with language such as, “An EVACUATION WARNING has been issued for Calabasas/Agoura Hills,” instead of “An EVACUATION WARNING has been issued for your area.”

- In questioning, Los Angeles County states, “The County has and currently does identify specific locations and neighborhoods in its emergency alerts,”²⁰ however, this specific case raises an area for improvement.

Similarly, damage may have been avoided for those receiving the message late or multiple times had the message included a time stamp explaining when the message was issued.

- In questioning, Los Angeles County states, “Yes, the County has updated messaging templates and guidance to include a date and time stamp within the message itself.”²¹

In both examples, Los Angeles County correctly points out that the 360-character limit for IPAWS messages constrains how descriptive alert messages can be drafted.

17. California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) Email to Rep. Robert Garcia's office

18. April 1, 2025, Response by Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

19. https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_ipaws-best-practices-guide.pdf

20. April 1, 2025, Response by Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

21. April 1, 2025, Response by Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

4. Repeat messages were not due to downed cell equipment as initially believed, but rather other technical issues.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, “We understand that some people received expired or cancelled WEAs, and reports at the time suggested this was due to cell towers going offline and later sending “cached” WEAs once service was restored. Based on the FCC’s investigation, however, it appears that cancelled or expired alerts were sent primarily due to other technical issues.

Specifically, one wireless provider reported that a small percentage of its 4G LTE equipment transmitted expired alerts due to an “overload” attributable to the high volume and long duration of alerts sent during the fires. That provider has since deployed a temporary patch to address this issue, and we understand that the provider is developing a permanent repair that will resolve this issue.”

The FCC further explained that given the lack of unique identifiers for alert messages, a cell phone may treat the same alert as two unique messages if received by different network providers, such as when a cellphone roams into another provider’s network or moves from 5G to a 4G LTE network.

Finally, the FCC explains that with messages that have long duration windows—Los Angeles County’s message was set to 24 hours—some cell phones clear the alert in less than 24 hours or when the phone is turned off, and with the alert still active, they may interpret the still-active original alert as a new alert.²²

POLICY PRIORITIES

1. Improve funding for the planning, equipment, training, exercises, operations, and maintenance on IPAWS Systems.

Timely, accurate, and understandable emergency alerts are essential to providing information to individuals at risk in life/safety situations and are a crucial tool for public safety agencies to convey the information citizens need to take protective actions and save lives.

However, the issues highlighted by the Los Angeles Wildfire false alerts reinforce the need for alerting authorities to have the proper planning, equipment, continual training, consistent exercises, and maintenance and upgrade of systems to properly perform in real-world disasters.

Cost burdens constrain state and local governments in all of these areas.

- The Congressional Research Service notes cost as a key issue for gaps in coverage among local alerting authorities, noting a 2020 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that only 70% of the country's population is covered by a local alerting authority authorized to use IPAWS.²³

22. April 1, 2025, Response by Federal Communications Commission Chairman to February 3, 2025, Congressional oversight letter.

23. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-294>

It also notes, “Although many state, local, territorial, and tribal governments use federal grants to supplement the costs of emergency alerting technologies, some local entities “may find it difficult to sustain their investment” in alerting technologies after their grant funding ends.”²⁴

2. FEMA needs to enhance minimum requirements for IPAWS Alerting Authorities on an ongoing basis and improve training; and implement standardization for third-party technology providers.

In 2019, following the false missile alert in Hawaii, Congress passed a law requiring FEMA to develop mandatory minimum requirements for state, local, territorial, and tribal governments using IPAWS.

FEMA had to include:

- Required training and guidance for alerting authorities that use IPAWS;
- A program for the annual recertification of IPAWS alerting authorities; and
- A certification program for tools used by IPAWS alerting authorities.

However, over five years later, while FEMA has taken steps on all of these criteria for Alert Originators, FEMA’s work is not finished.

- FEMA reports that a pilot program for IPAWS user certification is starting this year. “The training and certification program will provide Alert Originators critical alerting skills and proficiency, enabling more knowledgeable users with greater capabilities and confidence in using IPAWS.”

With respect to third-party technology software providers, this report outlines how an unsaved polygon and a defaulted auto-populating of the Los Angeles County geocode in Genasys Inc.’s software was the major cause of the Kenneth Fire faulty alert. This highlights the issues of technology interface, interoperability, and defaults/resets/automated processes that can result in erroneous alerts, which must be improved through coordination by FEMA.

The 2019 law required “the standardization, functionality, and interoperability of incident management and warning tools...”

- As FEMA responded to the members of Congress, “The inconsistency between software products complicates FEMA’s ability to provide standardized training, guidance, and technical assistance to state, local and tribal agencies using IPAWS.” FEMA plans to pilot the third-party technology certification program this year.

PUBLIC LAW 116-92—DEC. 20, 2019

133 STAT. 1855

SEC. 1756. INTEGRATED PUBLIC ALERT AND WARNING SYSTEM.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

(1) the term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Agency;

(2) the term “Agency” means the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

(3) the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives; and

(C) the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives;

(4) the term “public alert and warning system” means the integrated public alert and warning system of the United States described in section 526 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 321o);

(5) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security; and

(6) the term “State” means any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any possession of the United States.

(b) INTEGRATED PUBLIC ALERT AND WARNING SYSTEM.—

State and local governments. Native Americans. Territories. 6 USC 321o-1.

24. Congressional Research Service, “The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS): Primer and Issues for Congress”

3. The FCC should ensure mobile providers include location-aware maps by the December 2026 deadline, and FEMA should require Alerting Authorities to include the maps in alerts.

Maps can visually aid recipients to easily understand the boundaries of an ongoing or impending emergency and can improve message comprehension.

While LACOEM’s message did include a link to AlertLA.org, where they could have found a map, some users might not have Wi-Fi or cellular data to be able to open the link; and even if they could access the site they needed to scroll down, toggle an interactive map, and zoom in to see whether their neighborhood was included in the evacuation warning area.²⁵

In 2023, an FCC working group of public safety officials, wireless providers, mobile device manufacturers, and technical experts (CSRIC VIII) recommended alert messages include a link to access “location-aware” maps to depict the alert’s targeted geographic area and the recipients’ relative position to the hazard, which the working group found was feasible leveraging current technology.²⁶

In October 2024, the FCC finalized a rule, with the approval of all five FCC Commissioners, requiring commercial mobile service providers who participate in Wireless Emergency Messages (WEA) to “support the presentation of Alert Messages that link the recipient to a native mapping application on their mobile device to depict the recipient’s geographic position relative to the emergency incident.”²⁷

These location-aware maps can be achieved with a WEA-enabled map within the WEA message itself, a clickable link in the WEA message to a native mapping application, or to provide a link via a separate pop-up message that directs the user to the WEA-enabled map.

The FCC gave mobile carriers three years to implement the maps, with an effective deadline of December 15, 2026. When fully implemented by mobile carriers, this will be a

major improvement for the public to be able to understand their relative location to the warning area.

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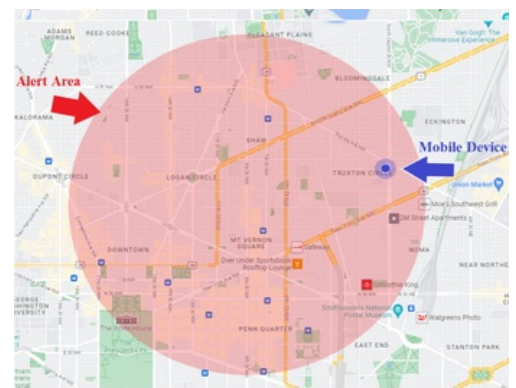


Figure 1.

25. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/16/us/evacuation-warnings-vulnerabilities-la-fires/index.html>

26. <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/CSRIC8-Report-WEA-API032123.pdf>

27. <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-adopts-rules-improve-accessibility-wireless-emergency-alerts>

4. The FCC should finalize performance standards.

In February 2020, the Government Accountability Office issued a report on Emergency Alerting, and its first recommendation was that the FCC “should develop specific, measurable goals and performance measures for its efforts to monitor the performance of new WEA capabilities, such as enhanced geo-targeting and expanded alert message length.”

In its report, the GAO found the “FCC has not developed goals and performance measures to help monitor how well the new capabilities perform during emergencies. Instead, we found FCC has taken an ad-hoc approach to monitoring WEA performance...By developing goals and performance measures for its efforts to monitor the new WEA capabilities, FCC would have clearer direction for what it plans to achieve and more specific means to assess the performance of the capabilities.”²⁸

Several of the issues raised in the FCC’s Kenneth Fire investigation could be aided by performance standards. For example, with the overloaded carrier, there is no telling how many other providers across the nation would have similar issues in a future disaster. Looking at how well capabilities perform, or fail to perform, would allow the FCC to develop guidance or fixes.

The idea of moving from a unique alert identifier issued by each carrier to a single alert identifier for each alert regardless of carrier, would be an example of an action the FCC can initiate in concert with FEMA. Similarly, with guidance on alert timing, or the potential for the FCC to recommend fixes to network issues that are discovered that lead to duplicate messages.

- The FCC’s April 2023 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking also included establishing Wireless Emergency Alert performance minimums, stating that the public will benefit from improved and targeted usage of WEA alert messages, and that greater accuracy in sending alert messages will result in less overshoot, which in turn will mean that fewer people will receive alert messages not intended for them. However, this rule was never finalized.²⁹



United States Government Accountability Office
Report to Congressional Requesters

February 2020

EMERGENCY ALERTING

Agencies Need to Address Pending Applications and Monitor Industry Progress on System Improvements

28. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-294>

29. https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-23-30A1_Rcd.pdf

CALL TO ACTION

Congress and federal agencies must act now to close identified gaps in alerting system performance, certification, and public communication. The lessons from the Kenneth Fire should not only inform reforms, but serve as a catalyst to modernize the nation's alerting infrastructure before the next disaster strikes.

ALTADENA NOT COVERED IN THIS REPORT

Tragically, at least 18 people died in the Eaton Fire in Altadena, and at least 12 people in the Palisades Fire in Pacific Palisades.³⁰ The deaths from the Eaton Fire occurred west of Lake Avenue, where residents did not receive an evacuation order until around 3:30 a.m. on January 8, 2025.

This is a serious issue and deserves an independent investigation. Reports currently do not indicate an issue with the IPAWS emergency alert system,^{31,32} and thus are not covered by this Congressional Report.

We expect the independent after-action review by the McChrystal Group, ordered by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, to cover these issues and any necessary recommendations related to a lack of a timely evacuation warning for the Eaton Fire in Altadena.

GLOSSARY

- Alerting Authority – A government agency (local, state, tribal, or territorial) certified by FEMA to issue public alerts using IPAWS.
- Alert Originator – A trained and authorized individual at an Alerting Authority who is responsible for creating, configuring, and sending emergency alert messages using platforms such as IPAWS. Alert Originators determine the content of the message, select appropriate delivery channels, and define the geographic area (via geocode and/or polygon) to receive the alert.
- ALERT Software – A Genasys, Inc. system used by Alerting Authorities to issue emergency alerts across multiple communication channels, including IPAWS.
- AOSP (Alert Origination Software Provider) – A third-party commercial software vendor that provides platforms for Alerting Authorities to compose and send alerts via IPAWS.
- CalOES (California Governor's Office of Emergency Services) – The California state agency responsible for overseeing emergency management and coordinating statewide response during disasters.
- EAS (Emergency Alert System) – A national public warning system that allows the President or authorized agencies to address the public via broadcast, cable, satellite, and wireline communication pathways.

31. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-04-03/la-fires-eaton-altadena-victim-found>

31. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-06/west-altadena-alert-failures-not-due-to-technology>

32. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-12/officials-not-told-to-evacuate-west-altadena-until-hours-after-flames-arrived-sources-say>

- EVAC Software – A Genasys, Inc. system used by public safety agencies to create and manage evacuation zone maps and designate areas requiring emergency protective action.
- FCC (Federal Communications Commission) – The federal agency that regulates interstate and international communications and oversees technical rules for alerting systems like WEA.
- FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) – A U.S. Department of Homeland Security agency that operates and maintains IPAWS, and supports emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Geocode – A broad geographic identifier (such as a county or city) used to define the general area where an alert can be sent.
- IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert and Warning System) – A FEMA-managed national system that enables authorized agencies to send emergency alerts through multiple communication channels, including WEA, EAS, and NOAA Weather Radio.
- Polygon – A more precise geographic shape or boundary used to target alert messages to specific impacted areas within a broader geocode.
- PROTECT App – A Genasys, Inc. mobile application that allows users to receive alerts, view hazard zones, and access emergency information.
- TTY (Teletypewriter) – A communication device used by individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired, capable of receiving emergency alert messages.
- WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts) – Short emergency messages sent by authorized agencies to mobile devices in a targeted area via participating wireless carriers.

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