



## Chief Executive Office.

### COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Fesia A. Davenport

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Robert Garcia  
U.S. House of Representatives  
109 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Garcia:

Thank you for your letter dated February 3, 2025, regarding Los Angeles County's (County) use of the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system on January 9, 2025. Safety is our top priority at all times, including during emergencies, and we welcome every opportunity to review and improve our systems and procedures, where needed, to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and to maintain public trust. We appreciate your partnership in our efforts to enhance our ability to serve the public and thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information.

During the January 2025 wildfire events, when faced with extreme weather and fire conditions, the County issued dozens of Wireless Emergency Alert messages without incident while responding to multiple simultaneous wildfires burning across Los Angeles County. On January 9, 2025, when a WEA message that was targeted for the Kenneth Fire errantly went county-wide, we took immediate corrective action to cancel the message, issue a clarification message, and work with our partners to identify the cause of the error. The County is now in the process of conducting comprehensive after-action reviews that are being led by independent third party subject matter experts, The McChrystal Group. We are eager to use the results of these reviews to enhance our ability to serve the public. Answers to the specific information requested in your letter are provided below.

**1. Please provide context and information regarding how Los Angeles County uses Genasys, Inc. to provide protecting communications tools including the EVAC and ALERT systems.**

The County uses Genasys Inc.'s software systems, Genasys EVAC and Genasys ALERT, to coordinate emergency protective actions, issue emergency alert and warning messages, and support communicating emergency information to the public.



Specifically, Genasys EVAC is a zone-based mapping system that helps public safety agencies better plan for and coordinate protective actions (i.e., evacuation orders, evacuation warnings, shelter in place notices) while responding to hazards. Genasys EVAC provides a common platform for evacuation coordination across different fire and law agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and other public safety stakeholders. Implementation of standardized zones is intended to simplify coordination and contribute to a better common operating picture amongst responding and support agencies. The Genasys EVAC zones can also be displayed on the County's emergency information webpage and in other communications to support accurate and timely public information. The County initially procured Genasys EVAC following the 2018 Woolsey Fire to create zones within high fire hazard areas. In coordination with the participating cities within Los Angeles County, the Genasys EVAC zone based maps were expanded throughout the county. Cities within Los Angeles County can use the Genasys EVAC platform independent of the County during planning, response, or recovery, as appropriate.

Genasys ALERT, on the other hand, is the software system that is used by the County to send messages via the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), which includes WEA messages. Genasys ALERT also allows for mass notifications via "Alert LA County", the County-branded mass notification tool using Genasys ALERT that can send text, email, and voice phone call messages to registered users and a select number of landline phones within the County's 911 database. Within the Genasys ALERT platform, users can target messages directly to identified Genasys EVAC zones. This capability streamlines the process of preparing and sending alert and warning messages to areas identified as at risk by field Incident/Unified Commanders. Prior to the use of zone maps, users had to manually draw the targeted areas on a map and export/import electronic files from multiple systems to deliver these messages. This earlier method was highly subjective, time-consuming, and prone to errors.

**2. Please describe the actions taken by both Los Angeles County and Genasys, Inc., and any interactions between the County and the company, over the days following the false alarms that could assist us in our oversight of best practices for emergency communications tools.**

On January 9, 2025, at 3:56 p.m., a single WEA message went county-wide instead of to the targeted area impacted by the Kenneth Fire. 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. In the following days, reports were received that individual phones continued to receive various WEA messages even after confirmation, both through the Genasys software and third-party tracking systems (e.g., PBS Warning, Alert, and Response Network), that there were no active messages in the IPAWS system. These "echo" alerts

appear to be a technical issue unrelated to the errant county-wide WEA message and outside the control of either the County or Genasys. Initial information from Federal partners indicates that these "echo alerts" were a result of telecommunication infrastructure coming back online after losing power, a phenomenon reportedly observed elsewhere in the United States in previous incidents where telecommunication infrastructure power was similarly lost.

When the Alert and Warning team within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) recognized that the Kenneth Fire message went beyond the intended target, they immediately took action to cancel the message within Genasys ALERT. This step should have stopped the message from being sent to any additional devices. A follow-up WEA message was then sent by EOC staff to communicate that the errant message did not apply to those outside of the immediate Kenneth Fire area. Genasys technical support was immediately engaged to assess why the targeted message went beyond the boundaries of the defined geographic zones being targeted. Representatives from Genasys were deployed to the EOC at the County's request to directly assist with this assessment and to support system updates. While the error was unable to be duplicated, additional safeguards were put into place. One such safeguard now requires the system to issue a warning message to a user seeking to issue an alert, notifying the user that the intended warning will be a county-wide alert.

As to the reported "echo alerts", the County worked with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), FEMA and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to flag the issue for further investigation and resolution due to their roles managing IPAWS and their direct interactions with telecommunication companies.

**3. Please describe the proper operating procedures to be followed by Los Angeles County for utilizing both Genasys' EVAC software for targeting evacuation areas, and Genasys' ALERT software for mass notification. What roles are played by Office of Emergency Management personnel and what roles are played by Genasys' software?**

Use of the Genasys software systems is a collaborative effort amongst multiple partners, including, but not limited to, the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and jurisdictional partners. Genasys EVAC software is used during pre-incident coordination and planning efforts. When incidents do occur and hazards are present, field responders can reference Genasys EVAC maps to identify geographic zones which may require a

protective action and use the standardized zone names to communicate that information to Incident/Unified Commanders (IC/UCs). Once protective actions are determined necessary by the field personnel in command of the incident, Genasys EVAC zones can then be used to request and coordinate emergency alert and warning messaging.

Specific details are always incident dependent, but in general, requests for emergency alert and warning messages are sent to dispatch personnel via radio who then coordinate with the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management's 24/7/365 on-site Watch Center to issue emergency alert and warning messages. When the Los Angeles County EOC is activated, as was the case beginning at 7 am on January 7, 2025, representatives from the EOC (Agency Representative) are deployed to field incident command posts and embed directly with the command staff managing the incident. When this occurs, the EOC Agency Representative relays emergency alert and warning requests and details directly between the field and the EOC Alert and Warning Unit.

Genasys EVAC software provides the standardized zone maps that all parties reference and use to determine areas needing to take protective actions. Genasys ALERT software allows users to develop and send emergency alert and warning messaging via the IPAWS and the Alert LA County tool.

**4. What is the status of your investigation into the cause of the alert message being sent beyond its intended targeting?**

Genasys technical support was immediately engaged to conduct an assessment as to why the January 9, 2025, WEA message went beyond its defined geographic boundary. Genasys reported that the issue was traced to the version 2 ("/v2") user interface of the Genasys ALERT/GEM system. The Genasys team was unable to duplicate the error but added additional safeguards (e.g., requiring the system to issue a warning message to a user seeking to issue an alert, notifying the user that the intended warning will be a county-wide alert) to prevent such an error from reoccurring. Following the implementation of safeguards and required testing by Genasys to confirm that any system error had been corrected and that necessary guardrails were in place to prevent the error from occurring again, the County transitioned back to local-led messaging via the Genasys ALERT platform on January 30, 2025.

**5. Specifically describe what issues were presented by the user interface of Genasys ALERT/GEM, and how Genasys has addressed these issues.**

Presently, we are not aware of obvious issues or anomalies that the Genasys ALERT user interface presented to users while drafting and sending the message that was targeted correctly, but ultimately went county-wide. Only when the

message was distributed publicly, did it become obvious that the WEA alert errantly went county-wide instead of to the targeted area impacted by the Kenneth Fire.

**6. Is Los Angeles County continuing to use Genasys for its emergency alert targeting or mass messaging? Please describe the CalOES system for emergency alert messaging and how it differs from Genasys.**

Yes, the County presently continues to use Genasys ALERT to issue emergency alert and warning messages. The County temporarily switched to having CalOES use their emergency alert and warning system to issue local WEA notifications beginning on January 10, 2025. Following the implementation of safeguards and required testing by Genasys to confirm that any system error had been corrected and that necessary guardrails were in place to prevent the error from being replicated, the County transitioned back to local-led messaging on January 30, 2025. The County has subsequently issued multiple WEAs and Alert LA County messages without error or incident utilizing Genasys ALERT to notify people in targeted areas about evacuation warnings due to the potential for debris and mudflow.

When relying on CalOES to issue WEA messages locally, the County EOC coordinated directly with the CalOES Warning Center to: request the WEA message, define the targeted area, and craft the message language. The Warning Center then issued the WEA via their alert and warning software once all information was confirmed by the County. As we do not operate the State's system, we cannot provide details specific to the CalOES alert and warning software and defer to CalOES to provide that specific information. The State Warning Center does, however, maintain the capability to issue alert and warning messages within the Los Angeles County Operational Area, as well as all 57 other counties in the State.

**7. Has the County considered adding time stamps for the warnings, including the date and time within emergency alerts, and if so, what is your implementation timeline?**

Yes, the County has updated messaging templates and guidance to include a date and time stamp within the message itself.

**8. Has the County considered adding text specifying specific locations/neighborhoods for emergency alerts, and if so, what is your implementation timeline?**

The County has and currently does identify specific locations and neighborhoods in its emergency alerts. This is done by either including a description of the local landmark, geographic features, or neighborhood being targeted in the

emergency alert and warning messages, and/or including a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) in every WEA message that directs recipients to the County's emergency information webpage for more information. This webpage includes a map of Los Angeles County that shows relevant details about a specific emergency (e.g., areas under evacuation areas and shelter locations). It should also be noted that due to IPAWS's character limits (a maximum of 90 or 360 characters) for WEA messages, there is a limit on how descriptive this portion of the message can be.

**9. Has the County considered adding visual maps in the body of WEA text messages for emergency alerts, and if so, what is your implementation timeline?**

Given the current configuration of FEMA's IPAWS, WEA messages are limited to only text with a maximum character count of either 90 or 360 characters in the main body of the message. The capability does not exist to include maps, images, most special characters or other attachments in a WEA message. As a result, the County follows the best practice of including a URL in every WEA message. This URL directs recipients to the County's emergency information webpage for more information, including a map of Los Angeles County that shows relevant details about a specific emergency (e.g., evacuation areas and shelter locations).

The County would support updates to IPAWS that increases the number of characters that can be used so that it can communicate more detailed information in the body of the critical alert and warning WEA message.

**10. What is the status of the joint investigation between Los Angeles County, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Federal Communications Commission into WEA alert messages sent following the cancellation and "echoes" continuing to transmit to phones across LA County?**

The County immediately notified Genasys, CalOES, FEMA, and ultimately the FCC of the reports being received that individual phones were continuing to receive various WEA messages even though there were no active alerts in Genasys ALERT and IPAWS. FEMA and the FCC began assessing the issue. As subsequent reports were received in the ensuing days, the County provided all additional information to these agencies to aid their assessment. The "echoes" included messages sent by other alerting authorities, further indicating a technical glitch not specific to the County.

The Honorable Robert Garcia  
April 1, 2025  
Page 7

Initial explanations provided to the County indicated that the "echo" alerts were most likely a result of telecommunication infrastructure coming back online after losing power and possible caching issues within their control software, meaning messages were stored in the systems "memory" and were ultimately sent once the power was fully restored, even though the message was no longer active. Since cell tower power and software infrastructure are not within the County's control, and since the County has no oversight or other role with telecommunication providers, we refer to FEMA and the FCC to provide further information.

The County appreciates your inquiry and shares your commitment to ensuring the reliability and effectiveness of critical emergency alert and warning tools in order to ensure the safety and protection of all County residents.

This response letter has also been provided to each Representative that signed the letter requesting information on Wireless Emergency Alert system. If you desire any additional information regarding the County's emergency management responsibilities, please contact Kevin McGowan, Director of the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management, at 323-980-2260.

Sincerely,

*Fesia Davenport*  
Fesia Davenport (Apr 1, 2025 13:35 PDT)

FESIA A. DAVENPORT  
Chief Executive Officer

FAD:JM:ADC  
KM:LL:BL:lo