

FEMA And The FCC Announce Adoption Of Standards For Wireless Carriers To Receive And Deliver Emergency Alerts Via Mobile Devices

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WASHINGTON D.C. -- As part of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), the nation's next generation of emergency alert and warning networks, the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) today announced the adoption of the design specifications for the development of a gateway interface that will enable wireless carriers to provide its customers with timely and accurate emergency alerts and warnings via their cell phones and other mobile devices.

The Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) is one of many projects within IPAWS intended to provide emergency managers and the President of the United States a means to send alerts and warnings to the public. Specifically, CMAS provides Federal, state, territorial, tribal and local government officials the ability to send 90 character geographically targeted text messages to the public regarding emergency alert and warning of imminent threats to life and property, Amber alerts, and Presidential emergency messages. The CMAS is a combined effort of the federal government and cellular providers to define a common standard for cellular alerts.

Today's announcement marks the beginning of the 28-month period, mandated by the FCC in August 2008, for commercial mobile service providers who have elected to participate in the design specifications known as CMAS to develop, test and deploy the system and deliver mobile alerts to the public by 2012.

"Working as a team with our partners in the public and private sectors, the adoption of the CMAS standard brings us even closer to making the nation's next-generation of emergency alerts and warnings – Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) – a reality," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. "Our goal is simple, to give one message over more devices to more people for maximum safety."

"Today's announcement brings us one step closer to ensuring that Americans receive critical emergency alerts and warnings to protect themselves on the go, anywhere, anytime," said FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski. "I applaud FEMA for its leadership and look forward to working with both FEMA and the wireless industry to expedite the delivery of this important public safety service to consumers."

Wireless carriers who choose to participate in the CMAS will relay authorized text-based alerts to their subscribers. To ensure that persons with disabilities who subscribe to wireless services receive these emergency alerts, the FCC adopted rules in 2008 that will require participating wireless carriers to transmit messages with both vibration cadence and audio attention signals.

The adoption of CMAS culminates the collaborative specification development work between FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T), the Alliance of Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS), and the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) and begins the next phase of CMAS collaboration with industry in which FEMA will build the Federal Alert Aggregator/Gateway. This collaboration with industry is a key component of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Programs' ability to provide alerts and warnings to the public through as many means as possible, including commercial mobile services.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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