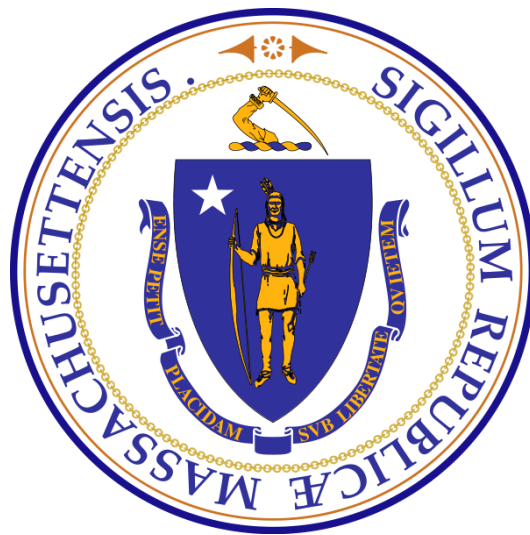


**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**



**Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan  
EMERGENCY ALERT AND WARNING PLAN**

**August 2022**

# Massachusetts Emergency Alert and Warning Annex

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# MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY ALERT AND WARNING ANNEX

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## **State Warning Point**

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Communications Center

## **Primary State Agency**

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

## **Supporting State Agencies**

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) Statewide Interoperability Office

Executive Office of Technology Services and Security

Massachusetts State Police

## **Supporting Federal Agencies**

Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Federal Communications Commission

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

National Weather Service

## **Other Supporting Organizations**

State Emergency Communications Committee

Auxiliary Communications Services (ACS)

Verizon

Verizon Wireless

Comcast

AT&T

Sprint

T-Mobile

IHeartRadio

# Section 1

## INTRODUCTION

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The Massachusetts Emergency Alert and Warning Annex describes the emergency alert and warning systems used to notify the public of threats and protective actions by response and recovery agencies and organizations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This annex addresses the following emergency communication topics:

- Identifies various emergency communication tools and their redundancies for alert and warning.
- Summarizes the process of disseminating emergency alerts and warnings to the public.
- The importance of ongoing communication with the public regarding an emergency.

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of alerts and warnings is to provide the necessary information to warn the public and effect the necessary actions that will lead to their safety and to deliver the messages to populations at risk of imminent threats with the goal of maximizing the probability that people take protective actions and minimize delay in taking those actions.

This plan is intended to provide an overview of federal, state, and local/regional emergency alert and warning systems in Massachusetts, and how these systems are used to provide critical, time-sensitive information to the public and emergency response partners in the Commonwealth prior to, during, and after an emergency.

This plan outlines the organization, operational concepts, responsibilities, and procedures to disseminate timely and accurate warnings to the public in the event of threat or emergency throughout the Commonwealth.

### 1.2 Scope

This plan addresses initial state-initiated emergency messaging to the public, not ongoing communications following initial alert/warning. Ongoing communications may use some of the same methods and systems described in this annex but are addressed in the ESF-2 (Communications) and ESF-15 (Public Information) annexes to the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

The terms “alert” and “warning” are often used interchangeably, but for the purposes of this plan, they will be defined as follows:

- An **Alert** is a signal used to indicate to recipients that something significant has happened or may be about to happen.
- A **Warning** typically follows an alert and provides recipients with additional contextual information, including what protective action should be taken.

## 1.3 Policies

- As an incident requires, and at the direction of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director or SEOC Manager, this annex will be activated to coordinate emergency alert and warning functions within the Commonwealth.
- Alerting authorities will issue alerts and warnings as necessary using available resources, which may include the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radios.
- All Massachusetts Emergency Support Functions (MAESFs) assigned responsibilities within this annex will develop and maintain the necessary plans, standard operating procedures, mutual aid agreements, and contracts to ensure strong coordination and to accomplish their respective tasks.
- This annex supports, and does not supplant, existing local, state, or federal emergency alerting or public information plans and policies.
- Primary emergency communications systems within the Commonwealth must have at least one redundancy/back up system to support them.
- Alerts and warnings disseminated by the Commonwealth will be equally accessible to and effective for individuals with disabilities and those who have limited English proficiency. All agencies and organizations with roles and responsibilities for state alert and warning must ensure their messaging and systems also ensure equal access and effective communications for these populations as well.

## 2.1 Situation

The Commonwealth has identified and prioritized hazards that can affect the State via the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), and Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Analysis (THIRA) processes. These hazards are included and addressed in the Massachusetts CEMP.

Should the Commonwealth be impacted by one or more hazards, there may be a need for immediate communication with the public to provide information and instruction on the protective actions to take prior to, during and after an emergency. In addition, emergency partners across the Commonwealth may need to be notified of an actual or potential emergency and instructed on actions to take. Primary communications systems supporting these needs may be impacted during an emergency, and redundant communications systems may need to be utilized.

## 2.2 Assumptions

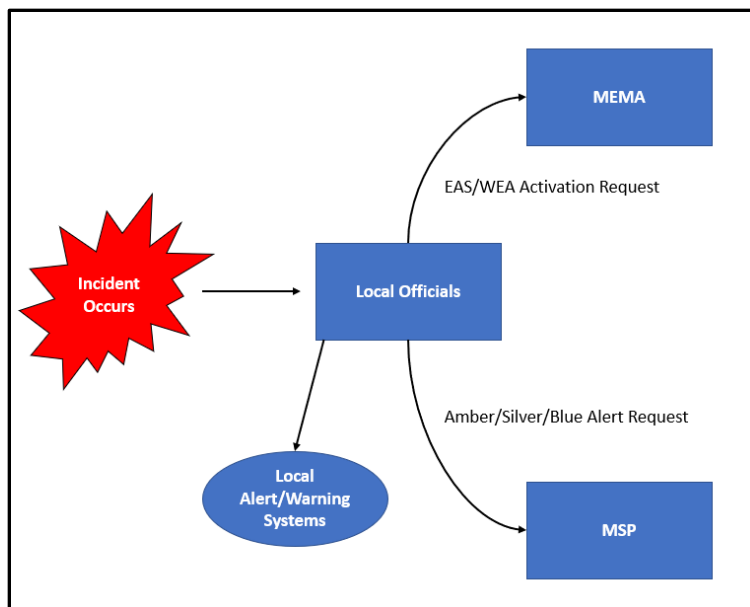
- Cell phone providers will deliver WEA messages to cell phones in targeted warning areas when activated by government officials.
- Most residents or visitors to Massachusetts have cell phones (nationally 96% of people own cell phones) and are thus able to receive WEA messages if their cell phone is WEA-enabled, their mobile provider participates in the WEA program, and they have cell reception.

## 3.1 General

Timely warnings to the public of threats or emergencies may save lives, decrease injuries, and reduce property damage and economic impact. Alerts and warnings should be:

- **Specific:** The message should make it clear which people are at risk and what protective action they should take.
- **Consistent:** The public should receive consistent and mutually reinforcing messages through all media and from all sources.
- **Confident:** Even if the underlying information is uncertain, there should be no hedging or ambiguity about the protective action recommendations.
- **Clear:** Wording must be in simple language that can be easily understood. Technical jargon should be avoided.
- **Accurate:** If people learn or suspect they are not receiving correct and complete information, they may begin to ignore both the message and source.

As the primary State Warning Point, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), supported by Massachusetts Emergency Support Function (MAESF) #2 and other MAESFs, as needed, will coordinate the dissemination of emergency alerts, warnings and notifications, and maintain supporting emergency alert and warning systems and tools under its purview.



*Figure 1: Direction and Control for Alert and Warning*



## 3.2 Direction and Control

### 3.2.1 Local

Local Incident Commanders or EMDs have the authority to issue alerts/warnings using locally controlled methods/technologies, including WEA (provided the jurisdiction has gone through the appropriate approval process, signed an agreement with MEMA, and contacts MEMA each time WEA is implemented within the jurisdiction). The Incident Commander/EMD or designee also has ability/authority to contact MEMA to request issuance of alerts and warnings via EAS or WEA. The local Chief of Police or designee may contact MA State Police to request broadcast of AMBER, Silver, or Blue Alerts.

### 3.2.2 State

MEMA's 24/7 Communications Center is the point of contact for receipt of all warnings and notification of an actual or impending emergency, disaster, or catastrophe. The dispatcher(s) on duty will notify other key personnel, chiefs, and department heads as required by incident type and existing standard operating procedures (SOPs).

The Communications Center issues most non weather-related related EAS/WEA messaging, with the exception of AMBER, Silver, or Blue Alerts, which are issued through MSP Communications at the request of authorized local law enforcement officials. Local officials or State agencies requesting issuance of EAS/WEA messaging must contact the Communications Center with the request. One of the below approving authorities must authorize release of the EAS or WEA message:

<b>If SEOC Activated:</b>	<b>If SEOC Not Activated:</b>
SEOC Manager	MEMA Director
Deputy SEOC Manager	MEMA Deputy Director
SEOC Operations Section Chief	MEMA Assistant Director for Operations

### 3.2.3 Federal

FEMA is the lead federal agency for coordination and implementation of IPAWS. FEMA ensures that this nationwide system is maintained and is operational. FEMA operates NAWAS to notify state warning points and other critical operations centers of a wide variety of events including military attacks. NAWAS is controlled from FEMA's Operations Center and the FEMA Alternate Operations Center in the National Capital Region. FEMA also partners with NOAA for seamless integration of message transmission through National Weather Service (NWS) national networks.

The NWS has specialist responsibility for originating public warnings regarding weather hazards. NWS also provides dissemination services to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The NWS operates several public alert and warning delivery systems, most notably the

National Weather Radio network of VHF radio transmitters serving most of the population of the United States.

The USGS has responsibility for the study and characterization of geophysical hazards such as tsunamis, volcanos, and landslides and issues alerts and warnings for state and local dissemination from centers including:

- The California Volcano Observatory located in Menlo Park, California
- The National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado
- The Landslide Information offices for the San Francisco Bay Area and Southwestern California
- The National Tsunami Warning Center located in Palmer, Alaska

### 3.3 Alert/Warning Methods and Technologies

Emergency alerts and warnings sent to the public and response partners may happen in a variety of ways, depending on available resources. Officials will disseminate emergency information via television, radio, EAS (all channel program interruption on all participating cellular and cable provider systems), Wireless Emergency Alerts, and reverse telephonic notification systems.

Using multiple warning systems and methods to deliver emergency information will maximize the reach and effectiveness of messaging regardless of language proficiency, disability, or other factors inhibiting clear understanding.

Jurisdictions within Massachusetts maintain, operate, and implement the following systems for emergency alert and warning:

#### 3.3.1 Federal/State

- **Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS):** IPAWS encompasses a suite of public alerting tools which can be used by government officials to push alerts to the public in a rapid fashion, including the Emergency Alert System, Wireless Emergency Alerts, and NOAA Weather Radio.
- **Emergency Alert System (EAS):** The EAS is a national public warning system through which EAS Participants deliver alerts to the public to warn them of impending emergencies. EAS Participants include radio and television broadcast stations, cable systems, wireline video systems, wireless cable systems, direct broadcast satellite service providers, and digital audio radio service providers. The primary purpose of the EAS is to provide the President of the United States with “the capability to provide immediate communications and information to the general public at the National, State and Local Area levels during periods of national emergency.” In Massachusetts, the National Weather Service and state authorities such as MEMA and the Massachusetts State Police also use the common distribution architecture of the EAS to distribute voluntary weather-related and other emergency alerts.
- **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA):** WEAs are emergency messages sent by authorized government authorities to the public through participating wireless service providers.

Wireless service customers who own compatible cell phones or other mobile devices will receive geographically-targeted, text-like messages accompanied by unique audio and vibration attention signals alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area.

- **NOAA Enhanced NWEM Dissemination:** The Enhanced NWEM Dissemination system is a comprehensive national solution for the centralized collection and efficient distribution of Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEMs). NWEMs created by government officials with public warning authority may be distributed through the NWS dissemination infrastructure, which includes:
  - NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio (NWR)
  - NOAA Weather Wire Service (NWWS)
  - Emergency Managers Radio Information Network (EMWIN)
  - NWS websites and Internet feeds
- **Auxiliary Communications System (ACS):** The amateur radio program in the Commonwealth has been transformed to an auxiliary communications system made up of 2 meter VHF repeaters across the state for auxiliary usage, to include the following services:
  - Support of disaster operations as requested by utilizing volunteer personnel and communications equipment throughout the Commonwealth.
  - Provide auxiliary links between local response agencies, shelters, MEMA regional offices, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), state agencies, private and volunteer organizations, and local elected officials.
  - ACES systems include the following:
    - Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) - Amateur Radio Operators provide vital communication links between local response agencies, MEMA Regional Offices, the SEOC, State Agencies as well as local governments.
    - Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) provide primarily local communication support to non-governmental agencies, as well as a cache of trained operators with equipment to support governmental agencies when requested.
    - Collect, Military Auxiliary Radio Service (MARS) is tasked by the Army, Navy/Marine Corps and Air Force to provide Continental US support to government and civilian agencies in times of emergencies. MARS operators provide primarily long haul HF voice and digital communications.
    - The NWS SKYWARN storm spotter program provides real time weather reporting information, with a focus on severe local thunderstorms, to the National Weather Service via Amateur Radio frequencies. SKYWARN operators provide situational awareness that is shared with Government agencies and private relief organizations.
- **NAS (Seabrook):** MEMA is the primary notification point for the Seabrook nuclear power plant. The Nuclear Alert System (NAS) is the primary system. Backup to the NAS is commercial phone and two-way radio networks.
- **AlertsMA:** AlertsMA is a communication tool, built on the Everbridge alerting platform, that allows Massachusetts government organizations to notify staff and stakeholders about

safety situations and other important events using people's preferred communication methods. This may include email, phone call, text message, a mobile app, and more. AlertsMA messages can be received on work and/or personal devices. The Commonwealth currently uses AlertsMA to notify Executive Branch employees and contractors as well as tenants of state-owned buildings.

### 3.3.2 Local/Regional

- **Public Alert Network Sirens (PANS) for Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant):** MEMA is the primary notification and activation point for the PANS Siren System covering the Seabrook Station Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ). In Massachusetts, the EPZ encompasses the communities of Amesbury, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, and West Newbury.
- **Telephonic Notification Systems:** Many communities (and some counties) in Massachusetts operate telephonic notification (“reverse 911” type) systems with the ability to call a database of telephone numbers and play an audio message. Depending on the community and the system, these systems may provide alerts to landline phones, cell phones, and/or email addresses. These systems provide the most localized emergency information in a community and are controlled by local officials. The public is encouraged to sign up for these local notification systems which can be done by contacting local public safety agencies.
- **Cable/Satellite TV Override:** In addition to voluntary participation in the EAS, many cable TV systems also have a provision by which local authorities can interrupt the audio or video feed of all channels to issue emergency notifications.
- **Variable Message Boards:** In addition to a warning tool, fixed or mobile variable message boards may also be used to relay ongoing emergency information.
- **Other Methods:** Local jurisdictions may make use of other alert/warning methods such as route alerting or door-to-door notification.

## Section 4

# ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

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This section describes the roles and responsibilities for implementing the Massachusetts Alert and Warning Plan.

## 4.1 Local Government

It is an inherent responsibility of local government organizations and officials to keep the public informed about natural, human-caused, and technological disasters and necessary protective actions. Local government officials typically have the most accurate and timely understanding of the situation, necessary protective actions, and potential adverse impacts of the incident.

Specifically, local governments are responsible for:

- Enactment of ordinances and/or policies identifying local roles and responsibilities to enable the issuance and coordinated dissemination of alerts and warnings to the public by responsible officials within their jurisdictions regarding imminent threats to human life and health and extraordinary threats to property;
- Installation, maintenance, user training and exercise/testing of local public alert and warning capabilities within their jurisdiction;
- Ensuring locally broadcast alerts and warnings are equally effective for and accessible to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs;
- Obtaining authority and tools for accessing Wireless Emergency Alerts systems as a Collaborative Operating Group (COG) via the FEMA Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) and in accordance with protocols developed by MEMA
- Development and maintenance of procedures for initiating, cancelling, and revoking accidental alerts, and for rapidly correcting and updating alert details as additional information becomes available
- Coordination with adjoining jurisdictions, the State, and the NWS regarding origination of alerts and warnings related to hazards that have effects across jurisdictional boundaries

## 4.2 State Government

### 4.2.1 Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

- MEMA's 24/7 Communications Center serves as the State Warning Point for the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which allows audio messages to be broadcast on all affiliated radio and TV stations, as well as cellular and cable providers, and for messages to be sent to cell phones and other mobile devices via WEA.
- Relaying emergency alerts and notifications from state or federal authorities

- Issuing public alerts and warnings via EAS or WEA at the request of a jurisdiction or when an incident's severity and breadth of impact threatens multiple jurisdictions
  - Development and maintenance of procedures for initiating, cancelling, and revoking accidental alerts, and for rapidly correcting and updating alert details as additional information becomes available
  - Coordinating with adjoining states related to alert and warning for hazards that have effects across jurisdictional boundaries
  - Publicizing standards of practice for effective and consistent statewide public alert and warning maintenance and execution
  - Ensuring alerts and warnings sent by or through MEMA or the SEOC are equally effective for and accessible to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs
- Providing technical assistance regarding the implementation and use of public alert and warning
- Issue an IPAWS MOU and IPAWS certificate for Collaborative Operating Group (COG) jurisdictions, acknowledging the approved event codes, and designated alerting authorities, ensuring required certificated training has been completed

### 4.2.2 Massachusetts State Police (MSP)

- Issue public alert and warning regarding the well-being of at-risk children (AMBER Alerts), vulnerable elders (Silver Alerts), and officer safety (Blue Alerts)
- Development and maintenance of procedures for initiating, cancelling, and revoking accidental alerts, and for rapidly correcting and updating alert details as additional information becomes available
- Coordinating with counterparts in abutting states related to alert and warning across jurisdictional boundaries
- Ensuring alerts and warnings sent by or through MSP are equally effective for and accessible to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs

### 4.2.3 EAS Participants

- Ensure that EAS equipment monitoring and transmitting functions are available whenever stations and systems are operating
- Transmit national level EAS messages, required monthly tests, and required weekly tests
- Ensure that EAS messages are accessible according to FCC regulations

### 4.2.4 WEA Participants

- Provide secure, redundant, and reliable connections to receive alert messages from the Federal alert gateway

- Be able to receive a required monthly test message initiated by the Federal Alert Gateway Administrator
- Transmit WEAs in a manner consistent with the technical standards, protocols, procedures, and other technical requirements implemented by the FCC

### 4.3 Federal Government

#### 4.3.1 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- Operate NAWAS to notify state warning points and other critical operations centers of a wide variety of events including military attacks. NAWAS is controlled from FEMA's Operations Center and the FEMA Alternate Operations Center in the National Capital Region;
- Build and maintain an effective, reliable, integrated, flexible, and comprehensive alert and warning system;
- Diversify and modernize the broadcast Emergency Alert System (EAS);
- Create an interoperability framework by establishing or adopting standards such as the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP);
- Ensure alerts and warnings are equally effective for and accessible to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs;
- Partner with NOAA for seamless integration of message transmission through National Weather Service (NWS) national networks;
- Facilitate dissemination of Presidential Alerts during a national emergency;
- Receive, authenticate, and deliver alert messages to all IPAWS-compliant public alerting systems.

#### 4.3.2 National Weather Service (NWS)

- Activate the EAS for imminent and dangerous weather conditions via NWR.
- Assist as requested with relaying non-weather EAS messages from state and local authorities via NWR.
- Issue Wireless Emergency Alerts according to the NWS's policies and procedures.



## 5.1 Plan Update and Maintenance

This plan will be reviewed on a regular basis according to the Emergency Management Program Administrative Policy. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency All Hazards Planning Unit will provide administrative support for the review process, including securing meeting space, inviting participants, developing meeting agendas, facilitating meetings, compiling and distributing meeting notes/minutes, and developing draft plan updates.

## 5.2 Training and Exercises

This plan will be exercised on a regular basis, either via a stand-alone exercise or as part of a larger exercise that incorporates the use of the IPAWS network. All exercises will follow Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) standards for development and evaluation.

## 5.3 Testing

The testing schedule for emergency communications system is detailed in Table 5-1. The MEMA Communications Center is responsible for testing systems<sup>1</sup> for which it has responsibility to maintain, documenting the testing, noting outcomes, and if needed, a corrective action plan. Testing logs are maintained by the MEMA Communications Center. Test outcomes may be noted only when there is an issue with the system; otherwise, a noted completion of a test indicates the test has been successful. Actual use of equipment and/or systems for day-to-day or emergency operations may serve in lieu of scheduled testing and will not be documented.

Most systems listed have written procedures associated with them. Systems that do not have procedures are those that either require no specialized skills to operate (such as landline and cell phones), or are the responsibility of another organization to implement.

Table 5-1: Communications Systems Testing

SYSTEM	EQUIPMENT AND CHANNEL	INITIATING TESTING AGENCY	TEST DAY AND TIME
FEDERAL NAWAS	MCC CONSOLE – FEDERAL NAWAS	FEMA OPERATIONS CENTER	TWICE DAILY (10p-12p)

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<sup>1</sup> Agencies and organizations that maintain systems that MEMA Communications may use are responsible for the testing and documentation of testing for those systems.



STATE NAWAS	MCC CONSOLE – STATE NAWAS	MEMA DISPATCH	TWICE DAILY (9a-9p)
FEMA FNARS	FNARS HF RADIO	FEMA REGION 1	WEEKLY - THURSDAY
RADIO ID	MCC CONSOLE	MEMA DISPATCH	TWICE DAILY (8a&8p)
NATIONAL TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER TEST	FEDERAL NAWAS	NTWC	MONTHLY
PILGRIM BECONS	MCC CONSOLE - R2 PILGRIM	PILGRIM STATION	MONTHLY
FIRE MOB NOTIFICATION	OUTLOOK EMAIL	MEMA DISPATCH	WEEKLY - WED (7p)
<b>SYSTEM</b>	<b>EQUIPMENT AND CHANNEL</b>	<b>INITIATING TESTING AGENCY</b>	<b>TEST DAY AND TIME</b>
I AM RESPONDING	I AM RESPONDING WEB SITE	MEMA DISPATCH	WEEKLY - WED (7p)
SATELLITE PHONE TEST	SATELLITE PHONES	MEMA DISPATCH	MONTHLY
BAPERN RADIO SYSTEM (WD)	MCC CONSOLE - (WEST DIST)	WELLESLEY POLICE	RANDOM
BAPERN RADIO SYSTEM (AW)	MCC CONSOLE - (AREAWIDE 3)	BROOKLINE POLICE	RANDOM
FIRE DIST 2 PLYM CNTY CTRL	MCC CONSOLE - (FD2 PLYMOUTH)	PLYMOUTH COUNTY CONTROL	DAILY (930a)
BAPERN RADIO SYSTEM (SE)	MCC CONSOLE – SE DISTRICT	PLYMOUTH COUNTY CONTROL	RANDOM
SEABROOK EPZ RADIO	MCC CONSOLE – MEMA VHF	MEMA DISPATCH	MONTHLY
SEABROOK NAS	MCC CONSOLE - SEABROOK NAS	SEABROOK STATION	RANDOM
VY NAS	MCC CONSOLE - VY NAS	VY STATION	RANDOM
ONPAGE	ON PAGE DASHBOARD	MEMA DISPATCH	MONTHLY
EAS/WEA	WEBEOC - IPAWS	MEMA DISPATCH	TWICE MONTHLY

## 5.4 Expenditures and Reimbursements

Individual agencies and organizations will be responsible for tracking costs incurred and maintaining associated supporting documentation for possible reimbursement via applicable funding sources.

## 6.1 Authorities

### 6.1.1 Federal

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, § 504
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title 2
- Homeland Security Act of 2002, Establishes U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended
- Executive Order 13407, Public Alert and Warning System
- CFR, Title 47, Part 11, Emergency Broadcast System

### 6.1.2 State

- Massachusetts Emergency Management Program Administrative Policy, January 2019
- Massachusetts Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), January 2019.

## 6.2 References

- Effective Communications for People with Disabilities: Before, During, and After Emergencies, National Council on Disability, May 27, 2014
- Emergency Alert and Warning Systems: Current Knowledge and Future Research Directions, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018.
- National Emergency Communications Plan, CISA, September 2019
- DHS OEC National Interoperability Field Operations Guide (NIFOG), June 2016
- MEMA Access and Functional Needs Resource Guide, 2019

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## APPENDIX A: EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS) PLAN

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The Massachusetts EAS Plan is a separate document, incorporated here by reference.

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## APPENDIX B: WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS

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Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) is a nationally adopted broadcast technology, launched in 2012, that sends location-based, targeted alerts to cell phones and other commercial mobile network devices, via the IPAWS infrastructure. These messages are delivered to all recipients with a cell phone or other enabled mobile device in the defined geographic area. Message originators can define the area of message distribution based on the unique needs of the message. Authorized message originators include the following:

1. The President of the United States
2. State and Local Officials
3. The National Weather Service
4. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Formerly known as the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), WEA messages are currently limited to 90 or 360 characters only. When an alert is received, a tone is sounded on the mobile device, and a text display appears on the device. Alerts are issued for the following types of scenarios:

- Imminent threat alerts, including natural- or human-caused disasters, extreme weather, active shooter, or other threatening emergencies in the area that are current or emerging.
- Public safety messages to convey essential, recommended actions that can save lives or property (e.g., emergency shelter locations or a boil water order)
- AMBER Alerts, urgent bulletins issued in child abduction cases.
- Alerts designed to provide the capability for the President to address the public during a national emergency
- *(Not currently implemented in Massachusetts)* Opt-in test messages that assess the capability of state and local officials to send WEAs. These messages will state that they are a TEST.

MEMA's Communication Center is authorized to distribute WEA messages as needed. A requesting authority (incident commander or official) can contact MEMA's 24-hour Communications Center (508-820-2000) to request that MEMA send a WEA because of an incident that has an immediate or imminent threat of impacting life or property.

Additionally, cities and towns that have gone through the appropriate approval process and signed an agreement with MEMA may issue WEAs on their own, provided they notify MEMA when they issue a WEA.

Through an established SOP, MEMA's Communications Center then works with the Agency Director, Deputy Director, and/or Operations Section Chief to review, approve, and send the WEA. The SOP, along with all required forms, is kept on file at all workstations in MEMA's Communications Center.

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## NWEM WEA Codes Transmitted by Key EAS Sources

Nature of Activation	Event Code
Avalanche Warning	AVW
Blue Alert	BLU
Child Abduction	CAE*
Civil Danger Warning	CDW
Civil Emergency Message	CEM
Earthquake Warning	EQW
Evacuation Immediate	EVI
Fire Warning	FRW
Hazardous Materials Warning	HMW
Law Enforcement Warning	LEW
Local Area Emergency	LAE
Nuclear Power Plant Warning	NUW*
Radiological Hazard Warning	RHW
Shelter in Place Warning	SPW
Volcano Warning	VOW

*\* In Massachusetts, this type of notification is reserved for state use only.*

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## APPENDIX C: AMBER ALERTS

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In the summer of 2001, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) initiated the “AMBER (American’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) Plan” initiative nationwide. The goal of this plan is to increase the chances of recovering abducted and endangered children. Three-quarters of the children who are kidnapped and later found murdered were killed within the first three hours of being taken. In 1996, nine year-old Amber Hagerman was abducted while playing near her home in Arlington, Texas. She was later found murdered. Police officials and media outlets joined forces to provide timely information about area child abductions to local listeners. There are many statewide, regional, and local plans in place around the United States to support this initiative. Massachusetts also has an active AMBER Alert Plan.

The Massachusetts Child Amber Alert Plan was initiated in October 2002. This is a voluntary, cooperative effort involving many agencies and organizations, including the Massachusetts State Police, the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the Lottery Commission, MassDOT, MBTA Transit Police, NCMEC, and local broadcasters. Radio, cable, and television stations statewide will receive a child abduction alert message and may broadcast this every 30 minutes for up to four hours in an effort to solicit the public’s assistance in recovering an abducted child and quickly apprehending the suspect.

Under this plan, law enforcement has the ability to utilize public broadcasters to send an emergency alert statewide when all of the following criteria are met:

1. A child 17 years of age or younger has been abducted;
2. Police believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm, injury, or death;
3. There must be sufficient descriptive information about the child, the abductor, and/or the suspect’s vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast will help locate the child.

Local law enforcement officials or members of the Massachusetts State Police must conduct an initial investigation to be certain whether the criteria for activation of the AMBER Alert Plan are met. If all criteria are *not* met, the AMBER Alert Notification Plan should *not* be activated.

### **Activation Request**

Where the three criteria have been met, a local Police Chief or his/her designee may decide to submit an AMBER Alert Activation Request by phone to the Massachusetts State Police Communications Section at 508-820-2121, or by faxing the completed Activation Request Form to the Communication Section at 508-820-2150, followed by a phone call to confirm receipt. Officers calling by phone should be prepared to relay as much of the information shown on the form as possible and should promptly complete and fax the form as well where feasible.

A recent photograph of the abducted child and the suspect, if available, should be obtained and forwarded to the State Police Communications Center, preferably in electronic format.

Upon receipt of the Activation Request, the Communications Section will immediately notify the AMBER Alert Activation Officer and AMBER Alert Coordinator, providing him/her with the

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information received. They will review and verify this information with the requesting agency/department and determine whether the request satisfies the three AMBER Alert Criteria.

They will then either:

1. Activate the AMBER Alert, or
2. Decline the Activation Request and notify the requesting agency/department of their decision.

In cases where the request is denied, the local police are still able to contact the media directly. In such cases, the media may treat this report as a news item or decide on a case by case basis to broaden an alert.

### **Alert Dissemination**

The Massachusetts State Police AMBER Alert Activation Officer will utilize the Emergency Management Network (EMnet) System to activate the Emergency Alert System and disseminate a broadcast (voice and/or text) over the Emergency Broadcast Network. This involves sending both a typed text and voice recorded message to the AMBER Alert primary partner EMnet terminals where the message is monitored and disseminated across the Commonwealth. Wireless Emergency Alerts would also be utilized to broadcast the alert.

Where an abduction takes place near a state border, or where there is reason to believe the suspect will flee the state, consideration should be given to notifying the New England States Police Information Network (NESPIN), so that police agencies in other states will be on the lookout for the missing person.

Stations that decide to broadcast the AMBER Alert will likely interrupt their regularly scheduled broadcasting on air. It is expected that this will take place every 30 minutes for the first four hours, unless the AMBER Alert is terminated.

Cable and television stations may decide to broadcast a text message.

### **Termination**

The Massachusetts State Police Communication Section should be notified immediately when an abducted child is recovered or found. The AMBER Alert Activation Officer must take appropriate actions to cancel the AMBER Alert and arrange to have the broadcasters notified.

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## APPENDIX D: SILVER ALERTS

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A Silver Alert is utilized to notify the public about missing senior citizens with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other mental disabilities in order to aid public safety in locating them. These messages are sent out over a number of media outlets, to engage the public in locating a missing person, similar to the use of the Amber Alert System.

In 2010, Governor Deval Patrick signed the "Silver Alert Bill," formally establishing the Silver Alert Community Response System in Massachusetts. This program is managed through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), in conjunction with the Massachusetts State Police (MSP), who broadcast these alerts when requested by local law enforcement or the MSP.

Per MGL Chapter 6a, Section 18L, the Massachusetts Silver Alert System shall be used to "alert public safety departments and private safety departments when an adult with serious memory impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease or other dementia, is reported to a police department as a missing person. This system shall direct and focus law enforcement and other key response resources in a cost-effective way within a geographic area consistent with the missing person's last known location." The legislation also calls for the development of a plan to ensure that the Silver Alert System utilizes localized reverse 911 type systems to broadcast these messages.



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## APPENDIX E: BLUE ALERTS

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A Blue Alert is activated when a violent attack on a law enforcement officer has occurred and a search for the suspect is active. Blue Alerts provide immediate information to prevent further harm and aid in the swift apprehension of the suspect/s.

In order to activate a Blue Alert, the following criteria must be met:

- A law enforcement officer has been killed, suffered serious bodily injury, or was assaulted with a deadly weapon, and the suspect has fled the scene of the offense.
- A law enforcement agency investigating the offense has determined that the suspect poses an imminent threat to the public or other law enforcement personnel.
- A detailed description of the suspect's vehicle or license plate is available for broadcast.
- Public dissemination of available information may help avert further harm or accelerate apprehension of the suspect.

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## APPENDIX F: NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ALERTS

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The National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Office (WFO) provides weather alerting and forecasting services to the United States. Specific to Massachusetts, the NWS Albany Office provides these services to Berkshire County. NWS Norton/Boston provides these services to the remainder of the Commonwealth (See coverage map). NWS utilizes several means to broadcast critical and hazardous weather information. Using NOAA Weather Radio, the National Weather Service can broadcast official weather warning, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on predetermined radio stations. The NWS can also use these stations to broadcast critical and time sensitive weather emergencies through the EAS.

The WFO based in Norton, MA manages and maintains six NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) transmitters across Southern New England (CT / RI / MA). An all-hazards radio network, NWR transmitters broadcast the latest weather forecasts and up-to-date weather information including watches, warnings, and other hazard information 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. As a single source for comprehensive weather and emergency information, NWR broadcasts warnings for all types of hazards including natural events, environmental accidents, and public safety issues. Coverage maps for NWR can be found here: <https://www.weather.gov/box/nwr>.

While special radios are made specifically for NWR weather broadcasts, any radio that receives very high frequency (VHF) broadcasts is also required to listen to NWR. In addition, some receivers such as police scanners also include the "weather band". Every Wednesday at 11:00 am Eastern Time, a test is conducted which tests the tone alert system. The test will not occur when severe weather is occurring or expected, and will be postponed to the following first good weather day.

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## WARNING FORECAST AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

