

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

(1) DEPARTMENT Office of Emergency Services	(2) MEETING DATE 12/4/2012	(3) CONTACT/PHONE Ron Alsop 781-5011	
(4) SUBJECT Request to approve a Memorandum of Agreement for County participation in the federal Integrated Public Alert Warning System (Clerk's file)			
(5) RECOMMENDED ACTION It is recommended that the Board authorize and instruct the Board chairman to sign a Memorandum of Agreement between the County of San Luis Obispo, Office of Emergency Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Program Management Office (Clerk's file).			
(6) FUNDING SOURCE(S) General Fund support and nuclear power plant emergency planning revenue	(7) CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT \$2,000.00	(8) ANNUAL FINANCIAL IMPACT \$2,500.00	(9) BUDGETED? Yes
(10) AGENDA PLACEMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (Time Est. _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Board Business (Time Est. _____)			
(11) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> Resolutions <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinances <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A			
(12) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR) N/A		(13) BUDGET ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED? BAR ID Number: N/A <input type="checkbox"/> 4/5th's Vote Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	
(14) LOCATION MAP N/A	(15) BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT? No	(16) AGENDA ITEM HISTORY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A Date _____	
(17) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW			
(18) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S) All Districts -			

County of San Luis Obispo



TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Office of Emergency Services / Ron Alsop
781-5011

DATE: 12/4/2012

SUBJECT: Request to approve a Memorandum of Agreement for County participation in the federal Integrated Public Alert Warning System (Clerk's file)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board authorize and instruct the Board chairman to sign a Memorandum of Agreement between the County of San Luis Obispo, Office of Emergency Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Program Management Office (Clerk's file).

DISCUSSION

This request is to enter an agreement to allow the County to participate in a new, next generation warning system. Nationally, the country is expanding beyond the traditional methods of alerting the public, such as outdoor warning sirens and radio and television alerts, to include alerts on cell phones, internet services, electronic signs, and other devices. As a result, a modernized alerting system for nationwide and local use has been developed that is known as the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).

In simple terms, IPAWS is a system that allows emergency warning information to be sent out from a single source simultaneously or close to simultaneously and distributed through or to a number of methods including broadcast TV and radio stations, cable TV networks, cell phones physically located within a surrounding geographical area, as well as NOAA All-Hazards radio broadcasts (NOAA is the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, which is the National Weather Service's parent organization). For example, currently from the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Emergency Alert System messages are sent out to television, radio, and cable television systems. IPAWS will allow for messages to not only go out to TV and radio, but also to cell phones within range of local cell towers, and to the NOAA All Hazards radio. Future uses could include the ability to also have messages sent to internet sites, digital road signs and other notification methods to be determined, such as home telephones.

While both EAS and the NOAA Weather All Hazards radio systems currently exist, although operating separately, a notable addition that IPAWS allows for is the ability to send messages to cellular phones in specific geographical areas. These messages will be text-like wireless alerts to the public. The messages will be limited to 90 characters with the intent being to get citizens and visitors aware of an emergency event and to then turn to other resources, such as the media, for more detailed information. The mobile devices will receive the alert messages if a phone equipped to receive such messages is within a set geographical area in or near the emergency situation.

This cell phone alert system, using cell sites to reach all phones in a cell site service area, is called Wireless Emergency Alert. Using IPAWS, an alert is sent to your wireless device depending on your geographic location; the alerts are sent to a targeted geographic location. For example, if a San Luis Obispo County resident visits Washington, D.C. and has a Wireless Emergency Alert capable phone they would receive applicable Washington, D.C. alerts. Visitors from outside of our county would receive San Luis Obispo County alerts while they are in our county.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are the result of a partnership between commercial mobile service providers, Federal Emergency Management Agency IPAWS, and the Federal Communications Commission, allowing authorities to send targeted alerts to personal cell phones, even when cellular voice and data services are overloaded and struggling to support person-to-person calls, text, or emails. This is made possible through the use of cell broadcast channels that send information to any cell phone using a cell tower. WEA will not track an individual's locations or personal data, as it uses a broadcast (one-way) technology. This assures that authorities cannot collect any subscriber-related data, including details on who is in the targeted area and/or who has successfully received the emergency alert.

WEA messages use a unique ringtone and vibration, but will not interrupt calls in progress. The default setting on new cell phones will be "opt-in" although individuals can choose not to receive imminent threat and AMBER Alerts, as discussed below. The broadcast of WEA messages from a cell tower continues for the entire time of the alert so that if a cell phone enters the affected area after the initial message it too will receive the alert message. There is no charge to individuals receiving the alerts.

While these alerts will appear on a person's mobile device similar to a text message, Wireless Emergency Alerts are not text messages. Instead, Wireless Emergency Alerts use a different kind of technology to ensure they are delivered immediately. Cell tower use, congestion, and capacity are not limiting factors when pushing out a WEA. Even if the cellular network is so congested that you cannot initiate a call or send a text message, a WEA will still be received.

Currently, newer phone models will be WEA capable and some phones may be upgradeable. The wireless industry estimates that by 2014, nearly all phones on the market will be WEA capable.

There are three types of WEA alerts:

- Presidential Alerts – Alerts issued by the president or his designee;
- Imminent Threat Alerts – Alerts that include severe man-made or natural disasters, such as tsunami warnings, hazardous material accidents, or severe weather events, where an imminent threat to life and property exists; and
- AMBER Alerts – Alerts that meet the U.S. Department of Justice's criteria to help law enforcement search for and locate an abducted child.

An example of an imminent threat or warning might be: "Tsunami Warning in this area. Avoid coastal areas. Check local media. – NWS" with the NWS indicating the message originated with the National Weather Service. As a side note, the National Weather Service will handle severe weather warnings, with local and state authorized agencies making the other type of notifications as shown above, other than presidential alerts.

Users can opt out of receiving imminent danger and AMBER Alerts by adjusting the settings on their wireless device but they cannot opt out of Presidential Alerts. All major cell carriers, as well as hundreds of smaller carriers, are participating in WEA on a voluntary basis. As with all new cellular services, it will take time for upgrades in infrastructure, coverage, and handset technology to allow WEAs to reach most or all cellular customers. As we understand it, some providers do have the service in place in our county.

Prior to the implementation of IPAWS by the County, we will provide public information about and to explain the system via news releases and other information distribution methods.

Additional information on Wireless Emergency Alerts can be found on the below links. The CTIA link also has cellular provider specific WEA information. Note: The term Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) may be seen on these sites, used in conjunction with the WEA term; the terms are interchangeable and refer to the same system.

http://www.ctia.org/consumer_info/safety/index.cfm/AID/12082

<http://www.fema.gov/commercial-mobile-alert-system>

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT

The lead coordinating agency nationally is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), thus the MOA authorizing San Luis Obispo County as an IPAWS user is with FEMA. Other agency involvement includes County

Communications, and County Counsel. County Counsel has reviewed the MOA. As with our existing Emergency Alert System, IPAWS implementation and ongoing maintenance and testing will be coordinated for the County jointly by County Communications and the Office of Emergency Services.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no cost to enter into the Memorandum of Agreement. The needed equipment and software for the basic Emergency Alert System (EAS) use was purchased by County OES and is being placed in service by County Communications as part of the routine replacement process for the existing EAS equipment. When the new EAS equipment was purchased, County Communications ensured the new equipment was able to use IPAWS in addition to standard EAS, thus there is no anticipated additional costs for equipment. However, additional software may be needed to tie our system into FEMA IPAWS. A vendor currently used by County OES for the County's emergency management software is making the IPAWS related software available at no additional cost. While we are optimistic this new software addition from the current vendor will be compatible with our system at no cost, if it is determined that software is not appropriate or efficient for our system, it may be necessary to purchase additional software. Since this a new software market, price ranges between vendors vary however they are in the range of \$2,000 - \$5,000 annually. If necessary, this would be addressed separately through the regular budget process.

RESULTS

To help ensure that the safety and interests of the County and its citizens are met through increased preparation of emergency management and public safety agencies by enhancing our ability to provide alert and warning notifications to the public.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Notice of Clerk's file.