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Location: Virtual

Using the Federal Alerting System to Find Missing and Endangered Persons

Webinar | May 6, 2025

Bambi Kraus,
Chief Office of Native Affairs & Policy

Emmitt Carlton,
Deputy Chief Intergovernmental Affairs Office

Using the Missing and Endangered Persons (MEP) Emergency Alert Event Code

This presentation and its contents are for informational purposes only; the Commission's rules in part 47 of the Code of Federal Regulations and the Commission's previous reports and orders adopting those rules represent the binding rules and determinations of the Commission.

Welcome

Bambi Kraus, Chief
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The Office of Native Affairs and Policy (ONAP) was established by FCC Order in 2010 to further the Commission's efforts to bring the benefits of modern communications to all Native communities. ONAP assists the Commission in developing policies and programs to address the lack of adequate communications services on Tribal lands nationwide. ONAP plans and leads the Commission's outreach to Tribal governments and organizations, with the objective of increasing their awareness of, and participation in, Commission programs and proceedings.

fcc.gov/native

Welcome

Emmitt Carlton, Deputy Chief
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The Office Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) was established on July 27, 2010, to serve as the FCC's liaison to municipal, county, state, and local governments and other federal regulatory agencies. IGA aims to foster a better understanding of FCC programs, policies, rules, and decisions, facilitate a two-way exchange of information and communications on telecommunications issues, and promote cooperation and coordination in areas of overlapping jurisdiction and enhance federal-state relationships. IGA is responsible for overseeing the work and activities of the Commission's Intergovernmental Advisory Committee, and various ad hoc special projects.

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Webinar Agenda

Welcome and Introductions
- *Bambi Kraus, Chief, Office of Native Affairs and Policy*
- *Emmitt Carlton, Deputy Chief, Intergovernmental Affairs*

Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Presentation
- *Leon Kenworthy, Chief, Cybersecurity and Communications Reliability Division*
  - Two Federal Alert Systems: EAS and WEA
  - How do Public Safety Agencies Send Alerts?
  - The FCC's Role
  - Missing Endangered Persons (MEP) Event Code
  - Resources

Questions & Answers

Closing Remarks
- *Bambi Kraus, Chief, Office of Native Affairs and Policy*

New Emergency Alert Code
for Missing Endangered
Persons (MEP)

The Missing and Endangered Persons (MEP) Emergency Alert System Event Code

Leon T. Kenworthy

Chief, Cybersecurity and Communications Reliability Division,
Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB)

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As the FCC's primary expert on public safety and homeland security matters, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) promotes the public's access to reliable 911, emergency alerting, and first responder communications. We do this by developing and implementing policies, consistent with the FCC's statutory authority, to ensure that our nation's first responders and the American public have access to effective and reliable communications, and by collaborating with federal government partners responsible for protecting the nation's communications infrastructure.

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Two Federal Alert Systems: EAS and WEA

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

- **Sent over radio, television, cable systems, and satellite radio/television providers** ("EAS Participants")
  - Messages can be 1,800 characters or up to 2 minutes in length.
  - Alerts are sent with one of 50+ event codes corresponding to specific types of emergencies.
- EAS Participants MUST participate in EAS but are NOT required to broadcast state, local, and Tribal alerts.
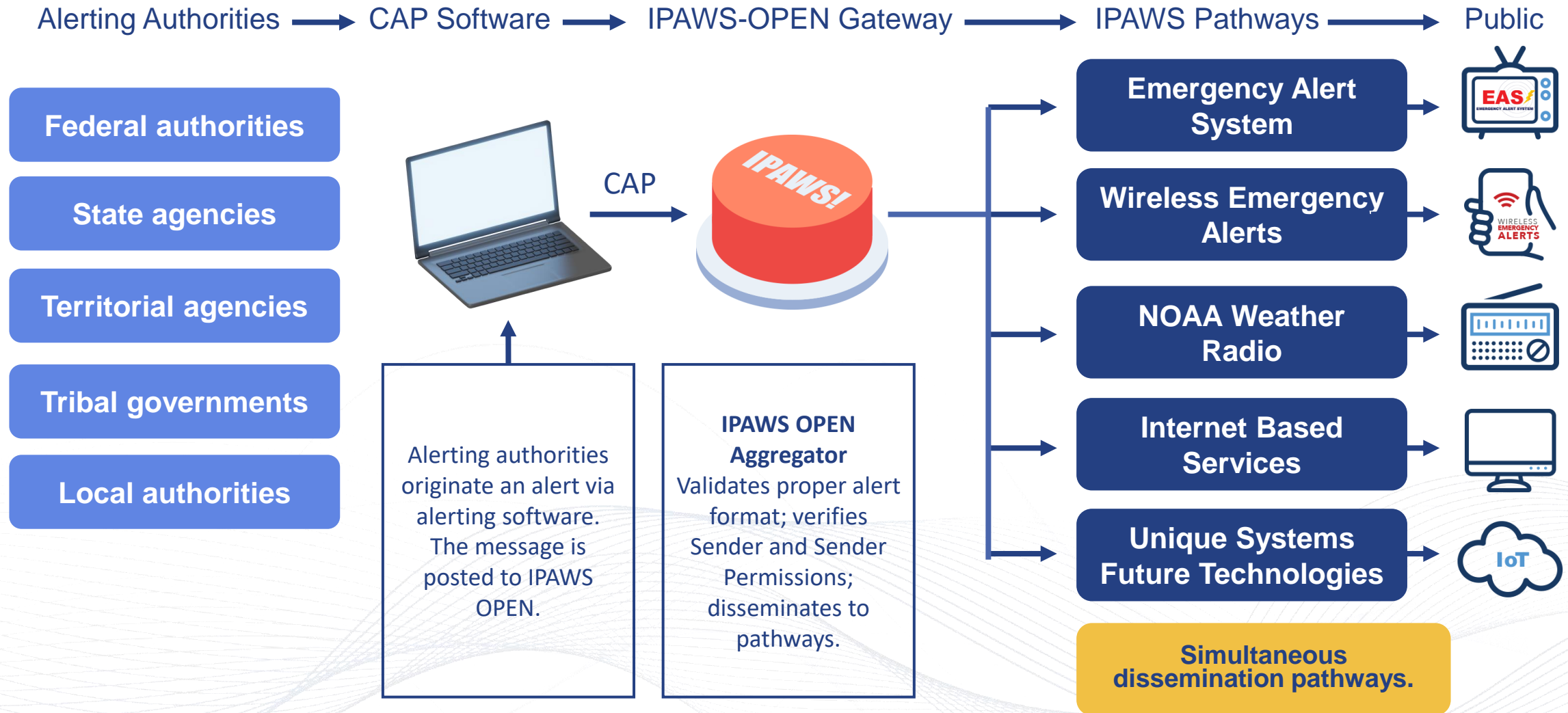
Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

- **Sent over cell phones** by wireless providers such as AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon, etc.
  - Message limit is 360 or 90 characters, depending on type of cell phone, and can include an embedded link.
  - Alerts are sent with one of four possible WEA classifications.
- Wireless providers can voluntarily participate but, if they do so, they MUST send all alerts.

How do alerts reach the public?

EAS — EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM

WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS

Alerting Authorities → CAP Software → IPAWS-OPEN Gateway → IPAWS Pathways → Public

- Federal authorities
- State agencies
- Territorial agencies
- Tribal governments
- Local authorities

CAP

IPAWS!

Alerting authorities originate an alert via alerting software. The message is posted to IPAWS OPEN.

IPAWS OPEN Aggregator
Validates proper alert format; verifies Sender and Sender Permissions; disseminates to pathways.

- Emergency Alert System → (EAS TV)
- Wireless Emergency Alerts → (phone)
- NOAA Weather Radio → (radio)
- Internet Based Services → (monitor)
- Unique Systems Future Technologies → (IoT)

Simultaneous dissemination pathways.

How do public safety agencies send alerts?

- State, local, Tribal, and territorial public safety agencies can become an authorized Alerting Authority by applying for authorization to use FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

- Authorized Alerting Authorities rely on FEMA-trained Alert Originators to send alerts through IPAWS

  - Craft message, determine geographic scope, and select EAS event code

- For EAS, depending on the state and broadcaster, there are also alternative ways to send EAS messages out over the EAS "daisy chain"

The FCC's Role

- Establishes EAS and WEA technical standards.
- Regulates communications providers.
- Reviews states' EAS plans.
- The FCC does not create or transmit alerts.

Missing and Endangered Persons (MEP) EAS Event Code

- On August 7, 2024, the FCC established a new EAS code for Missing and Endangered Persons (MEP).

- The rule will become effective on **September 8, 2025**. Once software is updated, alert originators can send EAS messages using the MEP event code.

What does the MEP EAS Event Code do?

- The MEP EAS event code is a "catch-all" code for all non-AMBER alert missing and endangered persons alerts such as Ashanti Alerts (federal alert), Silver Alerts (state alerts), Feather Alerts (California alerts), Missing Indigenous Person Alerts (Washington alerts), Turquoise Alert (New Mexico alerts), Missing Indigenous Person Alert (Colorado alert), etc.

- The MEP EAS event code also will allow for the categorization of all non-AMBER Alert missing and endangered person alerts.

What isn't the MEP EAS event code?

- The MEP EAS Event Code is NOT an alert. It is the mechanism that enables delivery of an alert for a missing and endangered person who does not qualify for an AMBER Alert

Why have an MEP EAS event code?

- The MEP EAS Event code **facilitates** the delivery of alerts by telling EAS Participants—radio and TV broadcasters, cable systems, satellite providers, etc.—about the nature of the alert

- EAS Participants must participate in EAS but they do NOT have to broadcast state and local alerts such as an MEP alert
  - Typically, EAS Participants' equipment "reads" an EAS message and uses the EAS event code to determine if it will broadcast the alert
  - By better describing the nature of the alert, we hope more EAS Participants will broadcast these alerts

- Authorities should consider encouraging local broadcasters to broadcast EAS alerts that use the MEP EAS event code

Resources

- For more information on FEMA's Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) go to https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system or email ipaws@fema.dhs.gov

- FCC MEP webpage has more information: https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs/missing-and-endangered-persons-emergency-alert-system-code.

- Questions? Contact:
  - Alerting@fcc.gov or
  - Native@fcc.gov or
  - IGA@fcc.gov

Questions?