Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

Presented by

Bradley Collins, Emergency Management Specialist
Emergency Services Department
Board of Commissioners Briefing
July 16, 2024
What is an IPAWS alert?

• IPAWS is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mass notification tool
  • Similar to an Amber alert
  • Signature sound

• English and Spanish message available

• Alerts are incident specific and sent to phones within a mapped-out area
Definitions/Functionality

- **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)** – Short emergency messages that alerting authorities can send to any WEA mobile device in a targeted area. This alert is commonly used by Emergency Management Agencies across NC.

- **Emergency Alerting System (EAS)** – National public warning system that allows alerting authorities to present messaging during an emergency across local television and radio stations.
Buncombe County Emergency Services holds agreements with NC Emergency Management and FEMA for system and messaging capabilities

- Approved incident types for Emergency Messaging
  - Blue Alerts (Officer injury/wanted suspect)
  - Civil Danger Warning
  - Civil Emergency Messaging
  - Earthquake Warning
  - Evacuation
  - Fire Warning
  - Hazardous Materials
  - Local Area Emergency
  - Law Enforcement Warning
  - Nuclear Power Plant Warning
  - Radiological Hazard Warning
  - Shelter In-Place Warning
  - 911 Telephone Outage Emergency
  - Volcano Warning
IPAWS Alert Process

➢ Emergency Management is notified of a request for an IPAWS message
➢ Confirm that the incident meets the criteria of an “imminent threat to life and safety due to manmade or natural disasters”
➢ Craft and send message using Emergency Messaging Templates
➢ Automatic notification to the following County Departments:
  • County Manager’s Office
  • Emergency Services
  • Communication and Public Engagement (CAPE)
  • Public Safety Communications (911)
➢ County Management and CAPE will begin sending out a broader message as needed
Next Steps

➢ Ongoing community outreach and education will happen throughout the year to keep residents informed of additional updates

➢ September - **National Preparedness Month**
  • Intensive preparedness campaign to bring awareness to specific actions that our community can take now to be Buncombe Ready
  • Intentional education around IPAWS tool

➢ BC Alerts will remain active as a its mass notification tool (in addition to website, social media, and coordination with local media outlets)
Questions