

How Tribal Governments Can Sign Up for Public Alerts and Warnings

About the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

IPAWS is a free internet-based tool that tribal officials can use to issue public alerts and warnings, such as severe weather alerts, to their jurisdiction. IPAWS allows tribes the capability to deliver a single alert simultaneously through multiple communication devices, reaching as many people as possible to save lives and protect property. These communication pathways include:

- Emergency Alert System (radio and television)
- Wireless Emergency Alerts (cell phones and mobile devices)
- National Weather Service Dissemination Services (NOAA Weather Radio)
- Legacy systems (sirens, digital road signs, etc.)

How Can a Tribal Government Sign Up to Issue Alerts?

Step #1: Designate a Tribal alerting authority

Tribal elected officials may designate which public safety officials in their tribe are granted the authority to alert the public of emergency situations occurring in the tribe's jurisdiction. These officials will be the alerting authorities who sign up the tribe for access to IPAWS and who will issue the alerts.

Step #2: Complete IPAWS web-based training

To send an alert through IPAWS, public safety officials must complete the IS-247 - Integrated Public Alert and Warning System for Alert Originators [course](#), offered free online by the FEMA Emergency Management Institute. The online course takes about two hours to complete. It is a prerequisite for full access to IPAWS for the purpose of public alerting. The tribe's primary alerting authority will be required to submit a copy of the course completion certificate as part of the application process.

Step #3: Ensure alerting software is IPAWS-Compatible

To send a message, the tribe must use its own alerting software that meets IPAWS requirements. Vendors of IPAWS-compatible alerting software are listed on the IPAWS website.

While there is no cost to send messages through IPAWS, there may be costs associated with acquiring compatible software. Tribes may want to consider sharing the cost of software and/or equipment with mutual aid organizations, neighboring jurisdictions or nearby public or private sector installations. Funding may also be available through the [Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program](#) to enhance existing alert and warning systems or to purchase new systems.



Step #4: Sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FEMA

Tribal governments interested in sending alerts through IPAWS must request an agreement with FEMA IPAWS governing system security. The agreement application can be found on the IPAWS website. Return the completed form to ipaws@fema.dhs.gov. FEMA will prepare a custom MOA and provide additional instructions to the tribe.

Step #5 – Coordinate with state governments on public alerting permissions

FEMA recommends that Tribal governments coordinate with state governments, as appropriate, to exchange information about the types of alerts they intend to issue, as well as the extent of their geographic warning area based on Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) codes. FIPS codes uniquely identify counties and county equivalents. This will ensure that Tribal public alerting permissions coordinate with state alerting plans and duly adopted operational plans.

What's Next?

Once all of the above steps have been completed, you will be notified by FEMA via e-mail that you are enabled to send alerts to the public.

Technical Assistance

A point of contact from the FEMA IPAWS office will be assigned to assist you and answer questions throughout the application process.

For more information visit <https://www.fema.gov/ipaws>. Contact the IPAWS Program Management Office at ipaws@fema.dhs.gov.

IPAWS is a national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency alert and information messaging to the public through cell phones and internet applications using Wireless Emergency Alerts, and to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System.