

No National Test this Year for FEMA's Integrated Public Alert & Warning System

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WASHINGTON – Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency response, FEMA will not conduct a national test of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) this year.

FEMA is moving the next national test of the system to 2021 out of consideration for the unusual circumstances and working conditions for those in the broadcast and cable industry. Although systems remain in place for rapid automatic transmission of the test message by broadcast and cable operators, the follow-on reporting activities associated with a national test place additional burdens on technical staff that are already quite busy maintaining as close to normal operation as possible.

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 (WEA), and to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Emergency officials across the country sent more than 360 important safety messages on the COVID-19 pandemic to their residents via WEA and EAS.

FEMA is required by law to test IPAWS at least every three years. The national WEA capability was most recently tested in conjunction with the EAS in 2018.

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