

EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM PLAN



Chester County Department of Emergency Services
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Certification of Annual Review

The Chester County Department of Emergency Services has reviewed this Emergency Alert System Plan. The Director of Chester County Emergency Services hereby certifies the review.

Date	Signature

Plan Approval

THIS PLAN IS APPROVED AS THE CHESTER COUNTY EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM PLAN. THIS PLAN IS DESIGNED TO COMPLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE COMMONWEALTH AND COUNTY REGULATIONS AND PROVIDES THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN DEALING WITH AN EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM.

THIS PLAN SUPERSEDES ALL PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM PLANS.

SIGNED THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2009

Edward J. Atkins, Director
Chester County
Department of Emergency Services

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) provides a powerful tool for public notification in an emergency situation. This tool enables Federal, State, and local officials to send emergency communication directly over broadcast airwaves.

This plan:

1. Provides operational guidance on how and when to deploy the system for Chester County.
2. Outlines procedures on how to send EAS messages at all hours even when Chester County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is operating as the commanding unit in the 911 Operations Center.
3. Illustrates the responsibilities of agencies directly involved with EAS message transmission in Chester County, including: Department of Emergency Services, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), and National Weather Service (NWS).
4. Develops testing procedures for Chester County's EMnet Terminal.

II. OVERVIEW

Function Description

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system that requires broadcasters to provide communications capability to the President to address the American public during a national emergency. Although this Federal capability has never been used in that manner, EAS is also enabled for use by State and local emergency management officials and the National Weather Service (NWS). EAS messages are sent via AM, FM, and satellite radio and broadcast and cable television stations.

PEMA has deployed EMnet terminals to all television stations and most radio outlets, and to each county throughout the state. These terminals provide local officials the capability to send EAS messages as well as lower priority notifications to the media.

A list of local stations that have EMnet terminals is provided in Annex B.

At-risk Populations

A small minority of households may be without access to television or radio broadcasts and therefore may not receive timely notification of emergency events. EAS messages are broadcast only in English, so speakers of other languages may have difficulty understanding instructions in an EAS message.

Personal Health and Safety

No risks to personal health and safety are anticipated from use of the EAS.

III. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania EAS plans and policies are the basis for this plan.
2. EAS should only be used in an emergency when lives are in immediate danger.
3. The only origination terminal (where messages can be created and sent) for EAS messages in Chester County is located in the County's 911 Center
4. The first choice for EAS activation is the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA).
5. The National Weather Service (NWS) will originate all messages pertaining to weather forecast warnings.
6. The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) will develop, manage and issue all 'Child Abduction Emergency' EAS events.
7. There are several types of messages that can be sent from the EMnet EAS Terminal. An EAS message is used for the most critical incidents. An EMnet Priority 2 Message is used to contact or update stations for incidents that do not reach the EAS threshold. An EMnet Priority 1 Message is used for routine communications.

IV. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

The Chester County Department of Emergency Services has prepared this Emergency Alert System Plan to coordinate activities associated with messaging critical information that possesses risk to personal life and safety and damage to public and private property.

The plan outlines roles and responsibilities, messaging guidelines and composition, and message disseminating, and guidance in making the many complex decisions that may be necessary before, during, and after an emergency as it pertains to EAS. The plan is designed to complement the Chester County Emergency Operations Plan.

V. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

State Plans

- Pennsylvania Emergency Alert System State EAS Plan, Effective April 1, 2004
- Commonwealth Of Pennsylvania, EAS / EMnet Policies And Guidelines For EAS Activations

Federal Statutes and Regulations

- Title 47 U.S.C. 151, 154 (i) and (o), and 303(r); 544(g) and 606; and 47 C.F.R. Part 11, FCC Rules and Regulations – Emergency Alert System, as amended.
- Subpart G of Part 73, FCC Regulations – 47 C.F.R. – “EAS Checklist”
- NUREG 0654, Federal Emergency Management Agency as pertains to emergency notification requirements for Nuclear Power Plants.
- Pennsylvania consolidated statutes - Title 35 - Health and Safety (Emergency Management Services Code)

Relevant Departmental/Agency Plans

- Chester County Emergency Operations Plan

VI. UPDATE AND MAINTENANCE

Update

The Chester County Emergency Alert System Plan will be reviewed each October. DES will be the lead agency for reviewing and updating the plan and will coordinate with other response partners as necessary.

In addition, the plan will be updated as appropriate when an EAS is disseminated. The update will be completed within 1 month following the date an EAS is broadcasted.

Maintenance

The Emergency Management Division of DES is responsible for coordinating with PEMA and other vendors to ensure that the EAS Terminal is updated with current software and antivirus protection.

On a quarterly basis, the Deputy Director of Emergency Services for 9-1-1 Operations will ensure that all documentation from PEMA and Comlabs located near the terminal is current.

VII. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

At the completion of EAS messaging, DES will develop an After Action Report (AAR) that outlines the activities that occurred. Within the AAR, steps needed to improve messaging will be identified. The complete AAR and action items for each agency will be distributed to all participants.

VIII. TRAINING, EXERCISING AND TESTING

Training

Training for EAS is provided by DES.

Exercising

Where appropriate, test EAS messages will be incorporated into exercise development and planning.

Testing

There is one test of the PA EMnet Terminal's operation that should be conducted on a quarterly basis:

1. Sending an EMnet Message

The Deputy Director of Emergency Services for 9-1-1 Operations will have responsibility for scheduling tests of the EMnet terminal with appropriate personnel. All DES staff trained on the EMnet terminal should initiate at least one EAS message per year in order to stay current on system use.

EAS Message Composition Guidelines are covered in Annex D.

IX. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) is the entity responsible for coordinating EAS plans and policies throughout the Commonwealth. PEMA has worked with the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters to develop a State EAS Plan, which outlines appropriate message codes, relationships between State and local officials and broadcast outlets, and testing procedures. PEMA has deployed the satellite based "EMnet EAS System" to all television stations and most radio stations located in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In 2003, PEMA's EMnet EAS Network became the primary delivery path for EAS distribution in Pennsylvania. This system enables the direct pass through of messages from emergency management personnel onto the airways, which allows for potentially quicker transmission of emergency alerts. Most local stations with EMnet terminals are not staffed during the overnight hours, so automatic propagation of alerts is a crucial component in ensuring that messages are actually transmitted over the airwaves. Because of the cooperation required from broadcasters, PEMA's EAS Plan stresses the need to limit EAS messages so that broadcasts are not pre-empted by non-urgent messages

The local Philadelphia EAS Operational Area as designated by PEMA consists of the following counties in southeastern Pennsylvania: Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester. Each county in the Operational Area is required to coordinate on EAS tests and participate in the Local Area Emergency Communications Committee (LAECC).

Being part of the Philadelphia Operational Area means that each county has the same Local Primary 1 (LP-1) (90.9 WHYI FM) and Local Primary 2 (LP-2 station)

(102.9 WMGK FM). The LP-1 and LP-2 stations have responsibilities for monitoring EAS messages sent via the EMnet system, tracking conditions via other sources including National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, participating in exercises, and educating the public. They also serve as a backup source of information for other broadcast outlets in the region to monitor during an emergency situation. Because of staff limitations, neither the LP-1 or LP-2 station's EMnet terminal is monitored around the clock.

A. ALERT CRITERIA AND TYPES

Criteria

Per the State's EAS Policies, Emergency Alert Activation (EAS) is authorized if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

1. "Loss of Life" or "Loss of Property" has occurred or is anticipated;
2. The required threshold of either "an EAS Short-Fused Response Requirement" or "An Emergency Event Affecting a Wide Area" has been met. These thresholds mean that immediate action is required by the public in a substantial geographic area. Events affecting a single person or neighborhood are not authorized uses of EAS.
3. The emergency event is of extreme threat to the general public at large

Types of EAS Alerts

The EAS system uses a code to illustrate the type of message to be sent.

A comprehensive list of all available message codes is included in Annex C.

EMnet Priority 2 Messages

If the criteria for an EAS message are not met, the State recommends sending an EMnet Priority 2 message using the EMnet terminal. A countywide Snow Emergency declaration is an example of when an EMnet Priority 2 message could be sent. A Snow Emergency or similar event requires public notification but is not a life-threatening situation. An EMnet Priority 2 message is essentially a secure e-mail delivered to each station's EMnet terminal. An EMnet Priority 1 message is used for routine communications and not during incidents. Whenever an EMnet Priority 2 message is sent, DES will also send a message to all Users on the ReadyNotifyPA public notification system.

B. EAS AUTHORIZATION

The following individuals are authorized to issue an EAS message and approve its content prior to its transmission.

- Director of Emergency Services
- Deputy Director of Emergency Services for 9-1-1 Operations
- Deputy Director of Emergency Services for Emergency Management

- Assistant Director of Emergency Services for External Liaison and Public Information
- On-duty 911 Supervisor

To prevent message duplication, during business hours and when the EOC is fully activated, DES will monitor the LP-1 and LP-2 stations along with other broadcast outlets to determine if PEMA or NWS has already transmitted an EAS message. EAS messages must be transmitted by DES personnel who have been trained on the proper operation of the EMnet EAS Origination Terminal.

When EOC Is Activated or During Business Hours

The EOC Manager will have the authority to approve the transmission of message delivery and message content.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has primary responsibility for sending all weather-related EAS messages. NWS has indicated that it would send a request for EAS activation for the following weather situations: Blizzard Warning, Flash Flood Warning, Severe Thunderstorm Warning, and Tornado Warning. If these conditions exist and no EAS alert has been transmitted, the EOC Manager should call the NWS Watch Desk at (609) 261-6604 to determine the status of any alerts issued by NWS and to see if additional action is required by DES.

Trained Operators for the EAS Terminal

The Public Information Officer (PIO) staffing the EOC for DES will have the primary responsibility for operating the EAS terminal. If no PIO is available, the DES Director or the EOC Manager will designate a trained staff member from DES to transmit an EAS message.

C. EAS MESSAGE COMPOSITION

Annex D: Message Composition Guidelines describes how an EAS message is to be formatted and properly disseminated. This tutorial has also been printed and placed next to the EAS terminal in the 911 Center. *Annex E: Message Delivery Technical Process* describes the systematic flow of an EAS message from inception to transmittal to receipt.

If the criteria for sending an EAS message are not met, DES can still notify broadcast outlets by sending an EMnet Priority 2 message using the EMnet terminal. These Priority 2 messages essentially act as an e-mail notification to each station's EMnet terminal. (An EMnet Priority 1 message is used for routine communications and not during incidents). Stations may not monitor their EMnet terminals at all hours so receipt of these Priority 2 messages may not be immediate.

ANNEX A: KEY AGENCY EAS CONTACT INFORMATION

1. **PEMA Watch Desk** (717) 651-2001 stateeoc@state.pa.us
Ron Falcone, EAS Coordinator
OFFICE: (717) 651-2729
MOBILE: (717) 979-9529
EMAIL: rfalcone@state.pa.us
2. **NWS Mt. Holly Watch Desk** (609) 261-6604 Joseph.miketta@noaa.gov
3. **Comlabs EMnet Vendor** (321) 409-9898 support@comlabs.com
4. **LP-1 Station 90.9 WHYY-FM**
Joyce Lieberman
OFFICE: (215) 351-1200 joycel@whyy.org
5. **LP-2 Station 102.9 WMGKFM**
Larry Paulausky* (484) 434-1327 eas@greaterphila.com
6. Chair of Local Area Emergency Communications Committee

ANNEX B: PHILADELPHIA AREA STATIONS WITH AN EMNET TERMINAL

FM Radio

1. 88.5 FM WXPN University of Pennsylvania Radio
2. 90.1 FM WRTI Philadelphia Temple University
3. 90.9 FM WHYY Philadelphia WHYY-12 Public radio / television
4. 92.5 FM WXTU Bala Cynwyd
5. 94.1 FM WYSP-FM
6. 100.3 FM WPLY
7. 101.1 FM WBEB Bala Cynwyd B101
8. 102.9 FM WMGK Philadelphia Classic rock

AM Radio

1. 560 AM WFIL Lafayette Hill Christian radio
2. 610 AM WIP Philadelphia Sports talk radio
3. 690 AM WPHE Philadelphia Spanish Radio
4. 900 AM WURD Philadelphia News
5. 1060 AM KYW-AM Radio
6. 1340 AM WHAT Philadelphia Talk radio
7. 1480 AM WUBA Philadelphia Spanish Radio
8. 1540 AM WNWR Bala Cynwyd New World Radio

TELEVISION

1. CBS 3 TV KYW Philadelphia
2. 6ABC TV WPVI Philadelphia
3. NBC10 TV WCAU Philadelphia
4. myPHL17 TV WPHL Philadelphia
5. FOX 29 TV WTXF Philadelphia FOX 29
6. MiND 35 TV WYBE Philadelphia
7. COMCAST - Philadelphia1 - 49th
8. COMCAST - Philadelphia2- Torresdale

Many broadcast outlets are part of national media groups (i.e. Greater Media or Clear Channel). As a result, some stations that are not listed in this table may have access to a terminal via shared facilities with another local affiliate.

ANNEX C: EAS EVENT CODES AUTHORIZED FOR USE BY COUNTIES

1. 911 Telephone Outage (No emergency services over a wide area)
2. Administrative Message (ADR)
3. Avalanche Warning (AVW)
4. Avalanche Watch (AVA)
5. Blizzard Warning (BZW)
6. Civil Danger Warning (CDW)
7. Civil Emergency Message (CEM)
8. Coastal Flood Warning (CFW)
9. Dust Storm Warning (DSW)
10. Earth Quake Warning (EQW)
11. Fire Warning (FRW)
12. Flash Flood Warning (FFW)
13. Flood Warning (FLW)
14. Hazardous Materials Warning (HMW)
15. High Wind Warning (HWW)
16. Hurricane Warning/Watch/Statement (HUW)
17. Immediate Evacuation Order (EVI)
18. Law Enforcement Warning (LEW)
19. Local Area Emergency (LAE)
20. Network Message Notification (NMN)
21. Practice/Demo Message (Permitted only to Comlabs FIPS Test Location) (DMO)
22. Radiological Hazard Warning (RHW)
23. Severe Thunderstorm Warning (SVR)
24. Shelter in Place Warning (SPW)
25. Special Marine Warning (SMW)
26. Special Weather Statement (SPS)
27. Tornado Warning/Watch (TOR)
28. Tsunami Warning/Watch (TSA)
29. Volcano Warning (VOW)
30. Winter Storm Warning/Watch (WSW)

ANNEX D: MESSAGE COMPOSITION GUIDELINES

1. **WARNING EVENT CODE** - The Federal Communications Commission's EAS Rules require that one of thirty-eight EAS 'Event Codes' be selected for an EAS activation.
 - a) The EAS Event Codes authorized for use on your PA EMnet EAS Terminal are available for selection under the 'Chose Alert Type' pull down menu once the 'Compose EAS' button has been selected in the EMnet Message Manager.
 - b) Choose the available EAS 'Event Code' that most closely relates to the actual emergency situation. See Appendix A for a description of common event codes.
2. **WARNING PERIOD** – The length of time that you expect the EAS activation to be valid is selected in the 'Alert Duration' pull down menu in the EMnet 'EAS Encoder Menu'. At minimum; select two (2) hours as the EAS warning alert duration, if applicable for the emergency situation, select a longer duration.
3. **WARNING AREA** – When preparing an 'EAS Message Text' the names of county(s) and/or the name of one of the nine subdivisions of the state in which the county or counties are located should be used. (e.g. NORTH WEST, WEST CENTRAL, SOUTH WEST, NORTH CENTRAL, CENTRAL, SOUTH CENTRAL, NORTH EAST, EAST CENTRAL, SOUTH EAST).
 - a) Warnings must be restricted to the area(s) the emergency event dictates. When activating EAS for a local area emergency event, reference well-known points such as a larger city or town or a familiar landmark.
4. **WARNING BASIS** - Indicate the credible source of the information (e.g. PEMA, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, FBI, FAA, County Emergency Management Agency, Fire, State Police, and Local Police) and provide brief amplifying information such as hazard type, hazard affects and the path of the danger.
5. **WARNING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC** - An EAS warning message must detail the actions you want the public to take– keeping instructions as brief as possible. Note: Avoid bland statements like "take shelter" without specifying what constitutes shelter. (Examples of instructions for various warning types are found in Appendix A of this procedure guide.)
6. **WARNING ORIGATION** - The following sequence outlines the procedure to be followed when initiating an EAS Activation on your PA EMnet EAS Origination Terminal. These guidelines can also be found in Appendix B of this procedure guide.
7. **WARNING MESSAGE COMPOSITION** - Instructions to the Public contained in an EAS message must fit the unique circumstance of the emergency event. EAS messages must be spoken in "Plain English" avoiding the use of acronyms. The EAS warning text message must stand on its own answering the following questions: Who; What; When; Where; and Why. Avoid run-on sentences, break down

paragraphs into precise declarative sentences and use adjectives appropriately without minimizing the threat. EAS warning message should be written in the past or future tense as messages written in the present tense will sound dated almost immediately. NOTE: Assume the public has no prior knowledge of the warning event or conditions. \ ABBREVIATIONS - No abbreviations should be used except "AM/PM" Use "midnight" for 12 A.M. and "noon" for 12 P.M.

8. **PROOFREAD** - Always proofread before issuing warnings. Check for clarity,
9. **LENGTH OF SPOKEN MESSAGE** - Be brief and to the point, the entire EAS warning message must be less than two minutes for an extreme event that requires extended detail. Note: Radio, TV and Cable Systems voluntarily broadcast EAS activations; therefore, the message length must be carefully limited to avoid excessive programming interruption.

ANNEX E: MESSAGE DELIVERY TECHNICAL PROCESS

1. An EAS activation is initiated by either of the following authorized agencies:
 - a) County Emergency Management
 - b) Pennsylvania Emergency Management
 - c) Pennsylvania State Police
 - d) National Weather Service
2. The EAS message is transmitted via EMnet EAS Network to all LP-1 and LP-2 designated stations, all television stations, and most radio stations – direct via satellite. {Stations with EMnet EAS terminals immediately broadcast the message.}
3. The EAS message from the EMnet EAS Network is received by the LP-1 and LP-2 stations and immediately forwarded to all broadcast and cable television facilities. Staffed stations have the option of retransmitting the EAS message during the next break in programming. {Breaking into programming is requested if the severity of the EAS event dictates.} Unattended stations are asked to immediately forward the EAS message.
4. Stations without EMnet EAS Terminals receive the EAS message via the LP-1 and LP-2 stations relay. Staffed stations have the option of retransmitting the EAS message during the next break in programming. {Breaking into programming is requested if the severity of the EAS event dictates.} Unattended stations are asked to immediately forward the EAS message.
5. The General Public receives the EAS message.
6. When the EAS event warrants, additional information will be provided by the secure messaging feature of the EMnet EAS terminal...before, during and after an EAS activation. Photos and attachments may also be sent via EMnet. {EMnet terminals must be monitored closely for addition information following an EAS activation!}
7. The public reacts by tuning-in for additional information, as promised.
8. Follow-up emergency public information is broadcast.
9. The public takes protective action during the emergency/disaster event.
10. Communication between EOC's/911 Centers and the PEMA State EOC are vital prior to, during and after an emergency event. Note: When sending warning messages for an event that does not qualify as an EAS Activation, the PEMA State EOC should be copied by including the address PA.000.

ANNEX F: ACRONYMS

DES	Department of Emergency Services
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
LAECC	Local Area Emergency Communications Committee
LP	Local Primary
NOAA	National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration
NWS	National Weather Service
PEMA	Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
PIO	Public Information Officer
PSP	Pennsylvania State Police