WA State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC)

Presentation to the House Innovation, Community & Economic Development, and Veterans Committee

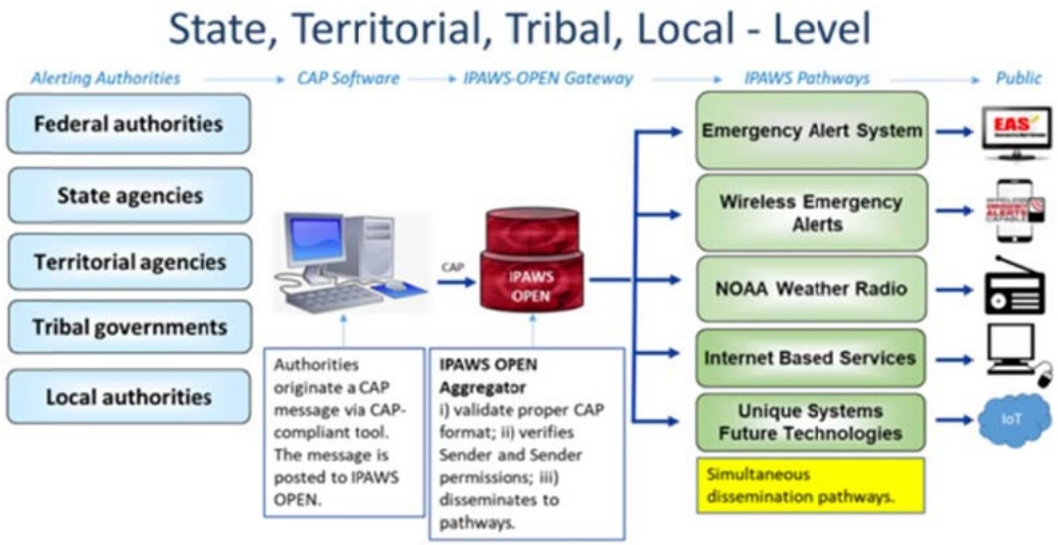
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Robert Ezelle
Director, Emergency Management Division
Washington Military Department

Kevin Wickersham
Response Section Manager

Overview of Alert and Warning Systems and Roles

- Federal
  - Regulates alert and warning systems and practices (FEMA)
  - Provides infrastructure and guidance (FEMA)
  - Regulates telecommunications companies (FCC)
  - Issues weather alerts for urgent situations (NWS)
- State
  - Coordinates among and provides guidance to local jurisdictions
  - Coordinates with FEMA to provide appropriate alerting authority to WA jurisdictions
  - Can alert on behalf of local jurisdictions when requested
  - Issues AMBER alerts (WSP and EMD at request from local law enforcement)
- Local
  - Have jurisdiction and responsibility (in WA) for emergency alert and warning (RCW 38.52.070)
  - Determine needs for alerts and warnings; issues when needed
  - Statutory responsibility for multilingual alerting (RCW 38.52.070 (3))



A diagram illustrating the distribution of information utilizing IPAWS.
Source: FEMA.gov

What are SECCs?

- Volunteer non-governmental organizations that develop plans for administering the Emergency Alert System (EAS) in each state
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires that each state maintain an EAS Plan and an SECC
- SECC members typically represent EAS participants, such as radio broadcasters and cable companies, and may also include state and local government officials

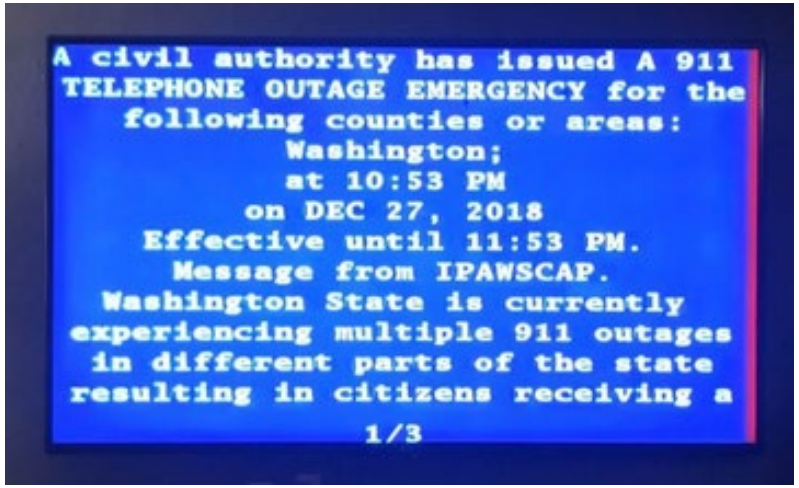


Image of EAS message on broadcast television during 911 outage in 2018

The WA SECC

- Meets every other month

- Responsibilities include:
  - Maintaining the State EAS Plan per FCC requirements
  - Guide and coordinate among Local Emergency Communications Committees (LECCs)
  - Address issues and concerns related to operation of the EAS in WA including technical issues, testing, etc.
  - Support emergency management jurisdictions by providing alerting guidance



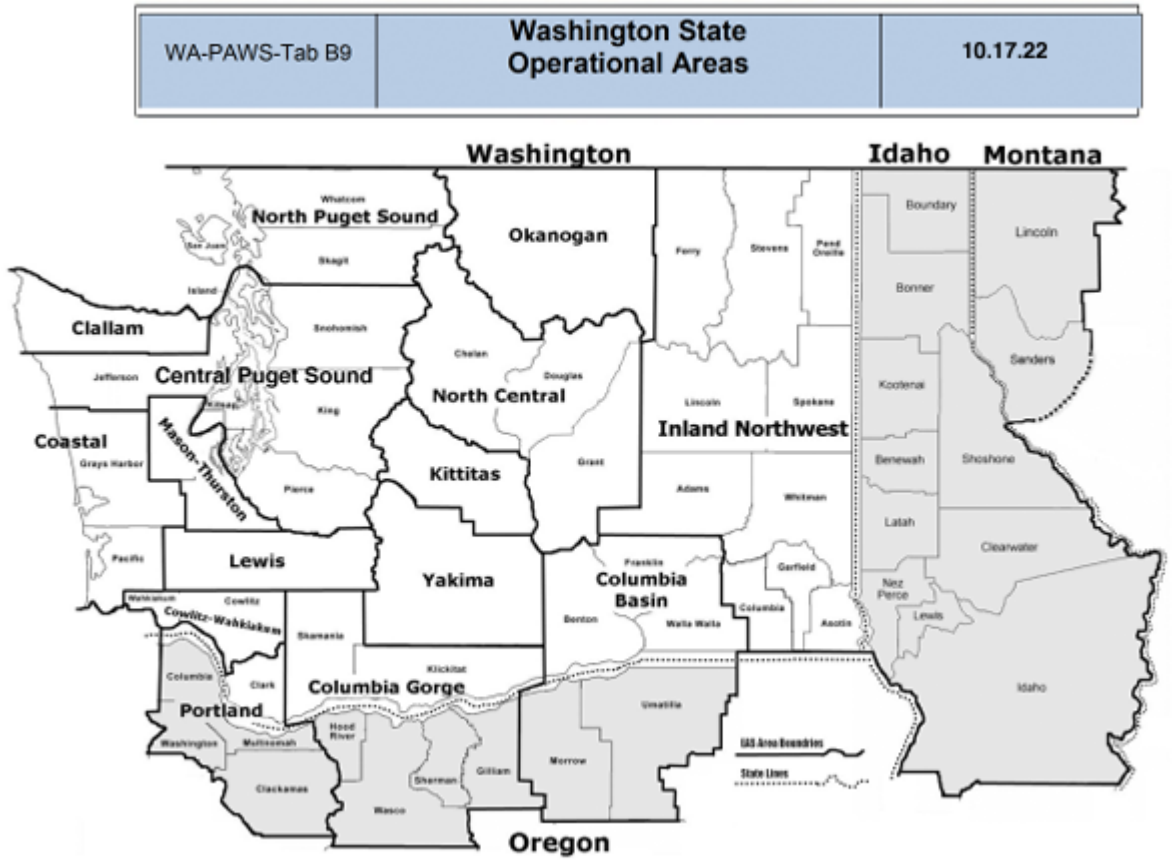
- Entities represented on the WA SECC:
  - WA EMD (Alert and Warning Center and State 911 Office)
  - Washington State Patrol (having responsibility for AMBER Alerts)
  - National Weather Service
  - County emergency managers
  - FEMA Region 10 Emergency Communications
  - Local Emergency Communications Committees (LECCs)
  - WA State Association of Broadcasters
  - Radio broadcasters
  - Cellular providers
  - Cable providers
  - Amateur radio clubs

The WA EAS Plan aka WA-PAWS Plan

- Washington Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (WA-PAWS) Plan
  - FCC required "EAS Plan," formal documentation of WA adoption of EAS
  - Serves as official documentation of:
    - Membership and operating bylaws of the SECC
    - Processes for appropriate use of EAS and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) in WA
    - Roles and responsibilities for use of EAS and WEA in WA
    - Procedures and schedules for regular EAS tests
  - Defines Operational Areas and Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC) areas
  - Provides recommendations for LECC structure, operation, LECC plans, etc.
- https://mil.wa.gov/wa-paws

WA Operational Areas (OAs)

- Each Operational Area has:
  - An Operational Area Plan
  - An LECC
- Two WA OAs are unique in the USA
  - Portland, OR OA includes Clark Co, WA
  - Inland Northwest (WA) OA partners closely with Kootenai Co., ID
  - In both cases, member counties jointly coordinate test alerting and are able to send emergency alerts *across state lines* when appropriate



A map showing the different Operational Areas within the WAPAWS Plan.
Source: EMD (WA PAWS Plan Tab B9)

Current Concerns

- Federal infrastructure for EAS is outdated and does not make use of modern technologies (streaming TV/video services, internet-connected home devices, etc) so has limited reach
- EAS and WEA only support English and Spanish language characters
- Confederated approach to emergency alerts in WA severely limits opportunities for multilingual alerting statewide
- Resources and expertise for effective alert and warning are limited statewide

Questions?