

ISAWS

**Introduction to the
Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security's**

Idaho State Alert & Warning System

Idaho's mass notification and public warning system providing alerts and warnings to Idahoans in regard to emergency situations and disasters.



ISAWS.ORG

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Idaho State Alert and Warning System (ISAWS) program will provide virtually immediate alerts and warnings to Idahoans in regard to severe weather, Amber alerts, emergency situations and natural or man-made disasters via public enrollment. This will increase our ability to reach Idahoans through non-landline methods, using modern technology, such as cell phones, email, PDA's, pagers and other methods. The program also provides the ability to deliver emergency messages to virtually any hardwired telephone in the state; including residential, business, and

unlisted or non-published numbers. Idahoans will be directed through a public outreach program to the enrollment page of www.ISAWS.ORG, where they will be able to voluntarily enroll in the program. All Idahoans are eligible including those with English as a second language, with a special focus on special-needs populations and their caretakers. Secondly, state and local officials will have access to alerts, warnings, educational support and informational materials. ISAWS can also be used by local jurisdictions as a personnel recall and employee messaging system.



AMBER ALERTS



FLOOD WARNINGS

WHY DOES ISAWS EXIST?

Safety and awareness

In our rapidly changing world the issues of public safety, security and awareness are more important than ever. The vast amount and types of modern technology available have allowed us to develop the ISAWS program. Now that virtually all Idahoans have access to one form of communication technology or another, including cell phones, email, pagers and PDAs, along with traditional methods of communication—radio, television, and landline phones—it has become easier than ever to keep the public informed of potentially hazardous weather conditions, floods, fires, natural and man-made disasters, Amber Alerts, and other emergency situations.

2006 Presidential Order

On June 26, 2006, a Presidential Executive Order led to the creation of the ISAWS program and directed that a mass notification system be capable of:

Notification in multiple languages

Notification to ALL citizens, including the deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired, and disabled

The creation and adoption of the Common Alert Protocol (CAP) language for the Emergency Alert System (EAS)

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rule, Dec. 2007, governor's Authority, CAP adoption

Compliance mandate following acceptance of CAP by FEMA; compliance deadline of Oct. 1, 2011

Ethical duty to provide accurate event notification as quickly as possible



ISAWS solves earlier warning system issues

Prior to the ISAWS program being put in place, the primary public warning system was the Emergency Alert System (EAS) which had a number of problems:

It was not Common Alert Protocol (CAP) compliant

It was not American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant

It was not compliant with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rule of December, 2007, which mandated CAP compliance following Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) adoption of CAP protocols

It was not compliant with the 2006 Presidential Executive Order that states that emergency notification systems have English as a Second Language (ESL) delivery capability

It had no ability to send additional materials other than audio messages with a message (i.e., photos, maps, videos, etc.)

ISAWS provides the Bureau of Homeland Security with a solid solution for these issues, with the added benefit of providing a much more robust warning system to the citizens of Idaho.

Solutions for a well-informed public

The ISAWS project is based on FEMA's Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS). Various vendors were consulted when looking for a solution to informing the public faster and with more accuracy. Identification of viable means of communication was identified and who the owners of those components were. A lot of research was performed in order to develop a system with the required components, capabilities and longevity. The result - The Idaho State

Alert and Warnings System (ISAWS) which incorporates the following system requirements:

CAP compliant

Public notification system ability to integrate with current EAS system

Network based

Multi-language messaging capability

Public enrollment via website

Multiple languages

Identifying special needs populations, their situations and their caretakers





SEVERE WEATHER

A SHORT HISTORY OF ISAWS

Some of the problems encountered with developing a new alert system involved merging new technology with Cold War era technologies and systems. The economic downturn has created hesitancy to develop new programs in both the public and private sectors. “Buy-In” within governmental agencies, the general public, private industry and broadcasters had to be overcome. National access to wireless communications systems and/or providers didn’t exist. There was a hesitancy of competing notifications system (EAS) vendors and/or manufacturers to share technology. All of which had to be, and have been, overcome.

ISAWS IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE

The ISAWS program was developed and tested over a period of 20 short months with a statewide rollout beginning April of 2011. A multi-lingual, public enrollment website was created and is online now. The State of Idaho is supplying equipment that will allow broadcasters that participate in the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and serve the Idaho public to connect to the ISAWS via the Internet if they are so inclined. Statewide microwave/vhf EAS transmissions will remain in place for redundancy.

The program was tested in Boise and Bonner counties, with over 14,000 test calls made to residents and businesses in Bonner County alone. ISAWS is also being used by various health districts and the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare.

A statewide ISAWS Public Education Campaign is underway to inform the public and encourage voluntary enrollment. We are also partnering with various public service groups to create awareness of and promote enrollment for emergency notifications via ISAWS.

Now that ISAWS is available statewide it will be able to connect with nationwide systems allowing for even more capabilities and national alerts. Most importantly, as more systems come online, there will be an overall decrease in the number of disaster related injuries and fatalities due to better information reaching more people quickly and in a manner that they can utilize.

ROAD CLOSURES



Benefits to local and Tribal Jurisdictions

How will ISAWS benefit state officials, local authorities and Tribal Jurisdictions? ISAWS is intended to not only alert the public, but be utilized by our state and local agencies. The benefits of ISAWS are:

It is an affordable mass notification system

It is an excellent personnel emergency recall tool

It has the ability to geo-target alerts and notifications

It can help identify special needs Idahoans and their caretakers which will assist local emergency managers with the planning process

It provides for multi-featured conference calling capabilities

It has the ability to compile results of testing and/or actual alert polling

It is designed to feed calls into the local telephone infrastructure at the most efficient rate, while not overloading the existing infrastructure or causing system crashes; no additional phone lines are required

Provides a web based graphic user interface message entry system

It is compatible with PDA's, cell phones, Smart Phones, text messaging devices, SMS messages, email accounts, traditional hard wired telephones, fax machines and TTD/TTY devices

It has the ability to integrate "shape" files into mapping programs for the use of the CAMEO software suite and plume maps for warning location selection

Idahoans have the choice of which type of notifications they wish to receive via voluntary enrollment

More than 30 system function and performance requirements make up the Scope of Work agreement for the ISAWS program

In addition to alerting and warning the public, ISAWS has the capability to inform local jurisdictions, Tribal jurisdictions, educational institutions including schools, colleges and universities, healthcare institutions and emergencies services. It also can be utilized by virtually any other state or local agency, including police, fire, and rescue organizations.

HOW DOES ISAWS WORK

An ISAWS system administrator enters the message via a simple, web based message entry page; this can be an emergency or nonemergency

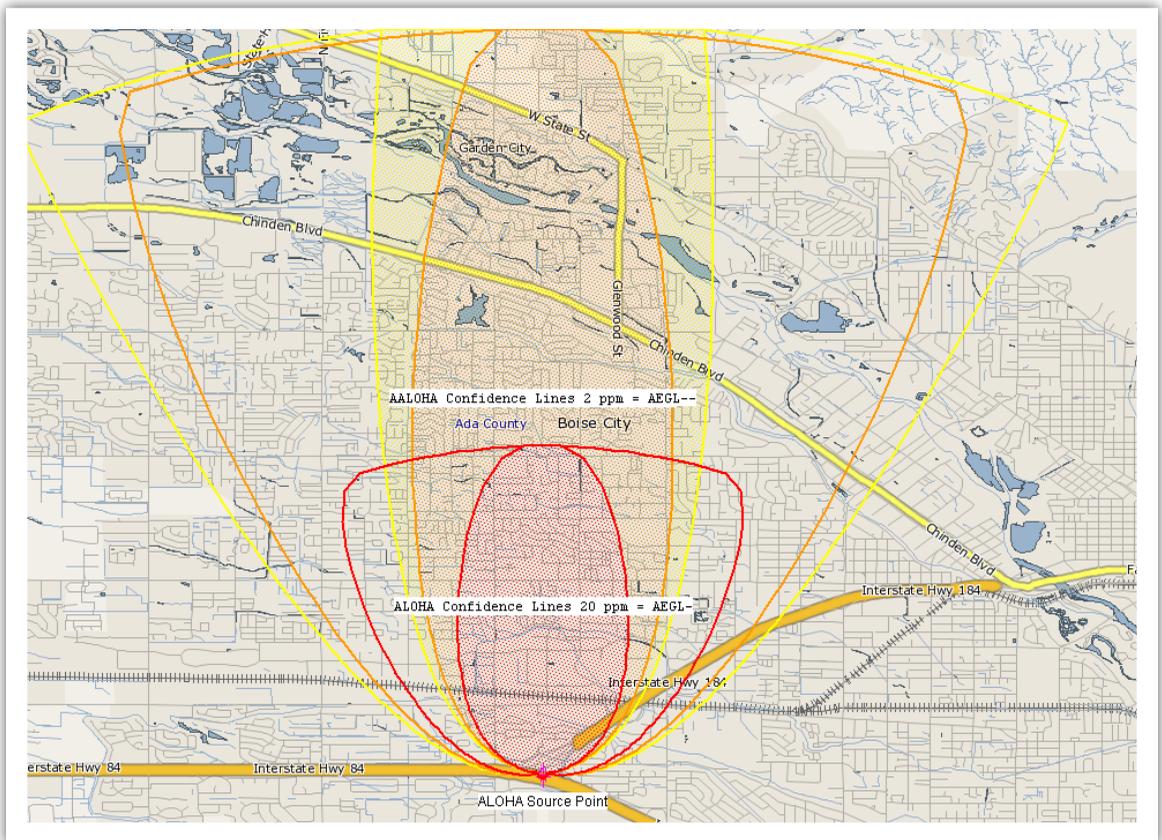
message for:

Internal contacts

The public

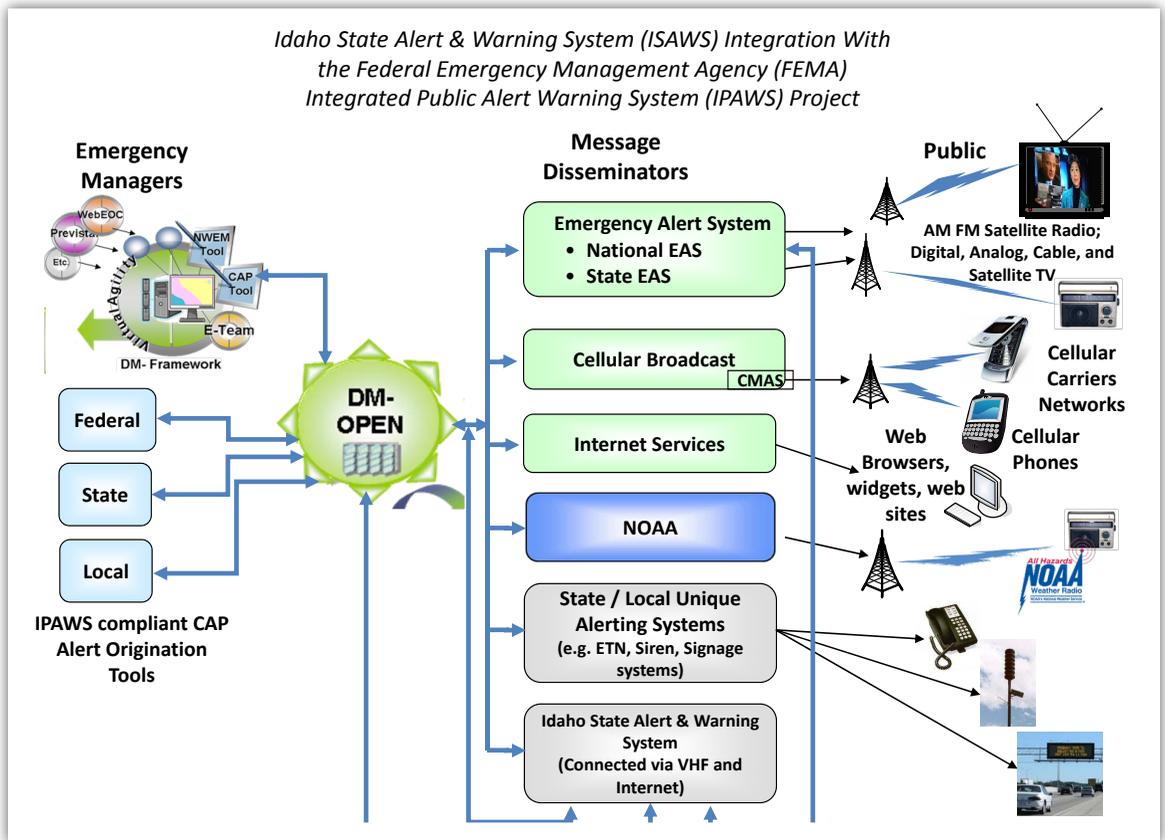
A group created by the system administrator

Any or all of the above



The distribution of messages can be determined by using zip codes; city, town or county names; or by using a mapping tool (radius, rectangle, polygon, etc.), or by using groups (created by the administrator).

This diagram illustrates how ISAWS can integrate into a national warning system in the future, along with different methods of emergency notification distribution.



CONCLUSION

The new ISAWS system has the versatility, expandability, and infrastructure to potentially save lives and keep all Idahoans better informed,

safer, and more secure. Enrollment is voluntary, and personal information will be secure. The information obtained may be used for emergency preparedness and planning purposes only.

If a local or Tribal Jurisdiction has the need for an emergency notification to be delivered to its citizens and does not have the ability to do so, ISAWS allows the BHS to provide that notification if requested to do so. Also, the ISAWS contract includes provisions that allow local and Tribal Jurisdictions to purchase a version of the system for their own use at a reasonable cost. This gives the

local or Tribal Jurisdiction access to a mass notification system for its own use, along with an internal messaging system that can be used to alert or recall SWAT teams, public utility employees, EMS workers, EOC staff, or any group that the jurisdiction creates as part of its system. Similar systems have even been used to dispatch fire department or rescue personnel to an incident.

MyState USA, located in Boise, has been awarded the contract to provide the web interface and telephone number database to the BHS for the ISAWS system. If you would like more information on ISAWS, please contact the BHS.

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