



Tennessee Association  
of Broadcasters



Department of  
**Military**

**TEMA**

# Alert & Warning Guidance

EAS, NWEM, & WEA Event Code Descriptions for Use  
with IPAWS in Tennessee

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This guidance serves as a resource for to state and local alerting authorities in Tennessee for use with the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System.

The following information provides definitions of the three-letter event codes that should be associated with Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), and Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEM), except where indicated. Along with the event codes are descriptions of the proper associated messages.

The use of these event codes by Tennessee's alerting authorities depends on established IPAWS permissions granted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Federal Communications Commission.

Tennessee alerting authorities should remember if the emergency is of such level, nature, or severity that IPAWS needs to be activated, to transmit an EAS, WEA, or NWEM message to the public, then the proper IPAWS activation procedures must be followed.

This includes using the correct alert code with the proper associated public message, or coordinating with the appropriate alerting authority on public transmission of the alert or warning, in cases where certain alert codes (e.g. Silver Alert, Child Abduction Emergency, etc.) identified in this document need to be used.

This guidance was developed through a collaborative effort between the National Weather Service, Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and Tennessee Emergency Management Agency.

## **IPAWS EVENT CODES – DESCRIPTIONS & DEFINITIONS**

### **ADR – Administrative Message**

A non-emergency message that provides updated information about an event in progress, an event that has expired or concluded early, pre-event preparation or mitigation activities, post-event recovery operations, or other administrative matters pertaining to the Emergency Alert System.

### **BLU – Blue Alert**

Local authorities who need to issue a **Blue Alert** to the public **MUST** coordinate the transmission of the alert with the **Tennessee Bureau of Investigation**. A Blue Alert is Issued when a law enforcement officer is missing, seriously injured, or killed in the line of duty. A Blue Alert can be used to quickly warn the public if a violent suspect may be in a community and the message can provide instructions on what to do if the suspect is spotted and how to stay safe. In Tennessee, this event code is reserved for use by the TBI exclusively.

### **AVA – Avalanche Watch**

Conditions are favorable or expected for an avalanche to occur but not imminent or occurring. The purpose of an Avalanche Watch is to warn the public that an Avalanche Warning is likely to be met in 24 to 48 hours.

### **AVW – Avalanche Warning**

An avalanche is imminent or occurring and the message provides specific recommended actions to the public.

### **CAE – Child Abduction Emergency**

Local authorities who need to issue a **Child Abduction Emergency** alert, or **Amber Alert**, to the public **MUST** coordinate the transmission of the alert with the **Tennessee Bureau of Investigation**. A Child Abduction Emergency is used to issue an emergency message, based on established criteria, about a missing child believed to be abducted. The alert message will describe the missing child, provide a description of the suspect or vehicle, and ask the public to notify the requesting agency if they have any information on the whereabouts of the child or suspect. In Tennessee, this event code is reserved for use exclusively by the TBI.

**CDW – Civil Danger Warning**

Used to warn of a specific event or hazard that presents a danger to a significant civilian population. The CDW gives specific protective actions is of a higher priority than the Local Area Emergency (LAE). Public protective actions for a CDW could include evacuation, shelter in place, other actions such as boiling contaminated water or seeking medical treatment. For example, a CDW could be issued for a contaminated water to instruct the public to boil water before consumption.

**CEM – Civil Emergency Message**

An emergency message regarding an in-progress or imminent significant threat to public safety and/or property. The CEM is a higher priority message than the Local Area Emergency (LAE), but the hazard is less specific than the Civil Danger Warning (CDW). For example, the CEM could be used to describe a change in local or state emergency activation levels in response to a threat or hazard.

**EQW – Earthquake Warning**

A warning of current or imminent earthquake activity. Authorized officials may recommend or order protective actions according to state law or local ordinance.

**EVI – Immediate Evacuation**

A warning where immediate evacuation is recommended or ordered according to state law or local ordinance. As an example, authorized officials may recommend the evacuation of a designated area where casualties or property damage could occur due to the release of flammable or explosive gas.

**FRW – Fire Warning**

A warning of a spreading wildfire or structure fire that threatens a populated area. Evacuation of areas in the fire's path may be recommended by authorized officials according to state law or local ordinance.

**HMW – Hazardous Materials Warning**

A warning of a release of non-radioactive hazardous material (such as a flammable gas, toxic chemical, or biological agent) that may recommend evacuation (for an explosion, fire, or oil spill hazard) or shelter in place (for a toxic fume hazard).

**LAE – Local Area Emergency**

An emergency message that defines an event that by itself does not pose a significant threat to public safety and/or property. However, the event could escalate, contribute to other more serious events, or disrupt critical public safety services. Instructions, other than public protective actions, may be provided by authorized officials. Examples include: a disruption in water, electric or natural gas service, or road closures due to flash flooding or heavy rainfall.

**LEW – Law Enforcement Warning**

A warning of a bomb explosion, riot, or other criminal event that poses a public threat. The message may include specific instructions or information such as authorized law enforcement will blockade roads, waterways, or facilities, evacuate or deny access to affected areas, and arrest violators or suspicious persons.

**Missing Adult or Missing Person**

See *Silver Alert*.

**NUW – Nuclear Power Plant Warning**

A warning of an event at a nuclear power plant, classified as a Site Area Emergency or General Emergency as classified by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). A Site Area Emergency is confined to the plant site; no offsite impact is expected. Typically, a General Emergency is confined to an area less than a 10-mile radius around the plant. Authorized officials may recommend evacuation or medical treatment of exposed persons in nearby areas. In Tennessee, this event code is reserved for use by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and pre-identified risk counties in the 10-mile radius of the state's nuclear power plants.

**RHW – Radiological Hazard Warning**

A warning message indicating the loss, discovery, or release of a radiological material. Examples include: the theft of a radioactive isotope used for medical purposes; the discovery of radioactive materials; or, a transportation accident which may involve nuclear weapons, nuclear fuel, or radioactive wastes. The warning may include specific protective action recommendations for the public from authorized officials.

### **RMT – Required Monthly Test**

A test message that is typically pre-scheduled and coordinated state- or region-wide on an annual basis. RMTs are generally originated by a pre-designated local or state primary station, or a state emergency management agency. In Tennessee, this event code is reserved for use by pre-designated local or state primary broadcast stations, pre-designated local alerting authorities as established by the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency.

### **RWT – Required Weekly Test**

A test message that consists, at a minimum, of the header and end-of-message tones. RWTs are generally originated by a pre-designated local or state primary station, or a state emergency management agency to confirm the operational status of their alerting software without interrupting broadcast or cable programming. In Tennessee, this event code is reserved for use by pre-designated local or state primary broadcast stations, pre-designated local alerting authorities as established by the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency.

### **Silver Alert – No Event Code**

Local authorities who need to issue a **Silver Alert**, or an **alert regarding a missing person**, to the public **MUST** coordinate the transmission of the alert with the **Tennessee Bureau of Investigation**. An emergency message, based on established criteria, of a missing adult, over the age of 18, who cannot return safely without assistance. The alert message will describe the missing adult and ask the public to notify the requesting agency if they have any information. In Tennessee, the Silver Alert emergency message designation is reserved for use exclusively by the TBI.

### **SPW – Shelter in Place Warning**

A warning of an event where the public is recommended to shelter in place (go inside, close doors and windows, turn off air conditioning or heating systems, and turn on the radio or TV for more information). An example is the release of hazardous materials where toxic fumes or radioactivity may affect designated areas.

### **TOE – 911 Telephone Outage Emergency**

An emergency message that defines a local or state 911 telephone network outage by geographic area or telephone exchange. Authorized officials may provide alternate phone numbers in the message content with which to reach 911 or dispatch personnel.

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**References for this document:**

State of Tennessee Emergency Alert System Plant (2013)

Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Title 38, & Title 58

Tennessee Emergency Management Plan (2018)

National Weather Service (2019)

National Weather Service Instruction 10-518

**For more information visit:**

[National Weather Service](#)

[Tennessee Association of Broadcasters](#)

[Tennessee Bureau of Investigation](#)

[Tennessee Emergency Management Agency](#)

*The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.*