



IT Program Assessment FEMA – Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS)

The DHS CIO conducted a program review of the FEMA – Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS) program in March 2012.

Description and Background:

IPAWS is the Nation's next generation, public communications and warning capability system. IPAWS consists of two major components, IPAWS-OPEN and the Emergency Alert System (EAS) Primary Entry Point (PEP).

IPAWS-OPEN is an application and data center infrastructure that provides alert aggregation, authentication, and dissemination to multiple communications media. Communications media include radio via the EAS, cellular phones via the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration All Hazards Radio, TV, Internet, and social media services. Authenticated Government officials at all levels nationwide can access the system.

The second component of IPAWS is the EAS Primary Entry Point (PEP) Expansion and Modernization program. PEP stations are commercial radio stations with additional FEMA-supplied capabilities that enable stations to operate and broadcast alert and warning messages under all-hazards. The IPAWS program is expanding the number of PEP radio stations to provide direct coverage to 90% of the U.S. population and is modernizing legacy PEP stations with retrofitted fuel systems, all-hazard protection, and redundant communications equipment. IPAWS will reduce the risk of system failure while delivering life saving information. The American people are the primary beneficiaries of IPAWS. Additional beneficiaries of the program are the Government emergency management personnel at all levels. IPAWS is working to bring about the successful integration of existing technologies through a collaboration of organizations having the same goals, saving lives and property. The program brought IPAWS 2.0 online and has completed multiple PEP sites.

Risks and Issues:

- If IPAWS lacks funding to perform modernization to legacy PEP stations, then there will be a greater probability of fuel release due to aging systems, fines associated with EPA non-compliance, and a decreased state of readiness for EAS system failure. Further reduced funding jeopardizes the deployment and mandates outlined in the Executive Order.
- If the nation is impacted by an electromagnetic pulse or space storm, then legacy PEP stations may fail to operate, decreasing the population coverage and effectiveness of the EAS to provide the President's message.



Mitigation Strategy:

The IPAWS program has developed strategies to mitigate the identified risks and will continually work to monitor and communicate changes in the risk status to efficiently address any issues. The budgetary concerns will be mitigated by an on-going stakeholder engagement strategy that provides status and education on the benefits and importance of the program with focused attention to key stakeholders such as Congress and the Government Accountability Office.

Legacy PEP Station vulnerabilities to electromagnetic pulse or space storm events are addressed through the installation of High Altitude Electromagnetic Pulse (HEMP)-protected shelters. These installations will be executed within the scope of the PEP Modernization program and will help ensure full transmission capabilities at legacy PEP stations during and after the course of a HEMP event.

Assessment:

The IPAWS program continues to achieve program execution success. The program plans to continue integration efforts at the FEMA Operating Center (FOC) and the FEMA Alternate Operating Center (FAOC), however future funding remains a primary risk. The program plans to continue stakeholder engagement and to provide a funding justification and mission impact assessment. Mitigations strategies have been developed, but lack of funding could still result in a Emergency Alert System (EAS) failure and prevent modernization to the legacy EAS Primary Entry Point stations. The CIO assesses the FEMA Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS) program as a **Medium Risk** investment.

Score: 3