



# Homeland Security

## IT Program Assessment

### FEMA – Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) (2010)

#### Review

The DHS CIO conducted a comprehensive program review of the FEMA Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) program on March 19, 2010. The IPAWS Program's mission, as defined in Executive Order 13407 (June 2006) is "to have an effective, reliable, integrated, flexible, and comprehensive system to alert and warn the American people in situations of war, terrorist attack, natural disaster or other hazards to public safety and well being." The FEMA IPAWS Program Management Office (PMO) was established to implement EO 13407 by development of the IPAWS system.

IPAWS seeks to achieve its mission by creating and maintaining an integrated, interoperable environment for alerts and warnings; attaining technical and operational interoperability by establishing or adopting common alert and warning protocols, standards, terminology, and operating procedures; and delivering unaltered coordinated messages to the public through as many communications pathways as practical. IPAWS will expand national alerting and warning capabilities beyond current capabilities using radio and television broadcast stations to other communication media, provide integration of alerting capabilities and systems, improve integration of underlying emergency alerting system architectures, and improve geo-targeting capabilities.

IPAWS has conducted an Analysis of Alternatives, selected an appropriate path forward, and is moving forward effectively to deploy required capabilities. The IPAWS PMO appears to have effectively addressed findings from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on IPAWS, implementing improved processes for systems development and deployment, improving communications with Congress on IPAWS progress and implementing a plan to verify dependability and effectiveness of systems used to disseminate alerts, and verify that IPAWS participants and partners have appropriate training and technical skills. The PMO appears to be appropriately staffed, and IPAWS PMO appears to have done a good job of capturing and managing requirements, and identifying, assessing, and trying to mitigate programmatic risks.

#### Assessment

The IPAWS program is well-run, has substantial accomplishments, and is actively addressing identified problems within the program. However, there are several risk factors external to the PMO that can pose significant impacts to the IPAWS program.

- Implementation of the MD 102-01 SELC process by FEMA. FEMA has apparently implemented the new DHS SELC process causing FEMA programs to "restart" the internal FEMA SELC approval process at Decision Event 1, and then proceed through the full set of gate reviews in order. Programs such as IPAWS which were further along in the system life cycle therefore "appear" to be at an earlier stage of development than they actually are.
- IPAWS funding reductions. FEMA has reduced the IPAWS program budget by \$7 million per year going forward to cover other FEMA budget needs. This funding reduction will have significant impact on the capability to deliver on the schedule currently planned.

The CIO assessment score below is primarily due to the risks associated with FEMA reductions to the IPAWS budget and the resulting schedule delays to implement the capabilities required by EO 13407.

**Score: 3**