

IT Program Assessment

FEMA – Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS)

Review

The DHS CIO conducted a comprehensive program review of the FEMA – Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS) program during September 2011. Program observations include the following:

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) is the Nations next generation public communications and warning capability. FEMA and the IPAWS Program Management Office (PMO) will work with public and private sectors to integrate warning systems to allow the President and authorized officials to effectively address and warn the public and State and local emergency operations centers via phone, cell phone, pagers, computers and other personal communications devices. Today, however, the public uses many different technologies to receive information and are less reliant on TV and radio. IPAWS will transform the national Emergency Alert System from an audio-only notification into a system that can reliably and efficiently send alerts by voice, text, or video to all Americans, including those with disabilities or who cannot understand English. IPAWS has two major components: Primary Entry Point (PEP) Modernization and the Expansion Program (PEP Program) Interagency agreement (IAA) awarded to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). IAA is over 60% funded with requirements to construct 32 new PEP stations. IPAWS, Open Platform for Emergency Networks (IPAWS-OPEN), development leverages Disaster Management (DM) OPEN (DM-OPEN) prior investments. IPAWS software development is performed by FEMA's Enterprise Application Development Integration and Sustainment (EADIS) program. IPAWS plans expansion of Emergency Alert System (EAS) direct coverage to 90% of the US population to include additional redundant transmission paths to Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations, and digital Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)-based alert message distribution. The program brought IPAWS 2.0 online and has completed multiple PEP sites.

There are four risks identified:

- If commercial broadcasters fail to support the PEP network then FEMA will be unable to construct a complete solution
- If cellular carriers opt not to invest in Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) capability upgrades to their network infrastructure then the IPAWS system will experience gaps in coverage
- If state, local, tribal, and territorial Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) are not upgraded to support IPAWS then it will prevent these centers from communicating with IPAWS Open
- If a mitigation strategy cannot address the reductions in the FY11-17 planned budget (currently, there is a \$47.0M funding gap between approved program

funds and the life cycle cost estimate) then the deployment schedule will be affected.

Mitigation Strategy

The IPAWS program has strategies in place to mitigate the identified risks. The IPAWS program must have an effective outreach program to work with the commercial broadcaster stakeholders to ensure they understand the importance and value of participating in the IPAWS PEP network. The outreach also applies to cellular carriers to obtain their cooperation and support to implement a nationwide Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS). The program must continue to work with state, local, tribal, and territorial EOCs to identify any incompatibilities and develop strategic plans that will lead to infrastructure upgrades to ensure these centers can communicate with IPAWS Open. The budgetary concerns must be addressed by continuing a stakeholder engagement strategy that provides education and status of IPAWS to key stakeholders such as Congress and the Government Accountability Office so they are better informed of IPAWS capabilities and successes. The program will also continue to work with the National Continuity program to provide impact assessments and budget justification. The program may be forced to re-baseline the schedule to match available funding constraints.

Assessment

The IPAWS Program has achieved results but has identified risks with which it must contend. The program has mitigation plans in place and DHS will continue monitoring to ensure their successful implementation. The CIO assesses the FEMA Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS) program as Level 3 – Medium Risk.

Score: 3