

TIP #32: Choose Event Codes Carefully

Now Available: IPAWS Event Code Descriptions Fact Sheet

Event Codes define the nature of an event. Emergency management must select an Event Code when sending Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), and Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEM - future capability) via IPAWS.

Many public safety officials are uncertain about the meaning of each Event Code, and the proper criteria for selecting an Event Code with respect to localized threats and hazards.

The IPAWS Program Management Office (PMO) has created [Event Code Descriptions for Use with IPAWS](#). This Fact Sheet details 21 NWEM Event Codes available to State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal Alerting Authorities, as an aid to composing public alerts. Weather warnings are reserved for the National Weather Service (NWS) and therefore, are not included in this list.

The Event Code Descriptions Fact Sheet lists each code, such as **CEM** (Civil Emergency Message), **LAE** (Local Area Emergency), **EVI** (Immediate Evacuation) and many others, with clear definitions and example use cases. Selection of an Event Code depends on each Alerting Authority's established IPAWS permissions.

Event Codes in Wireless Emergency Alerts

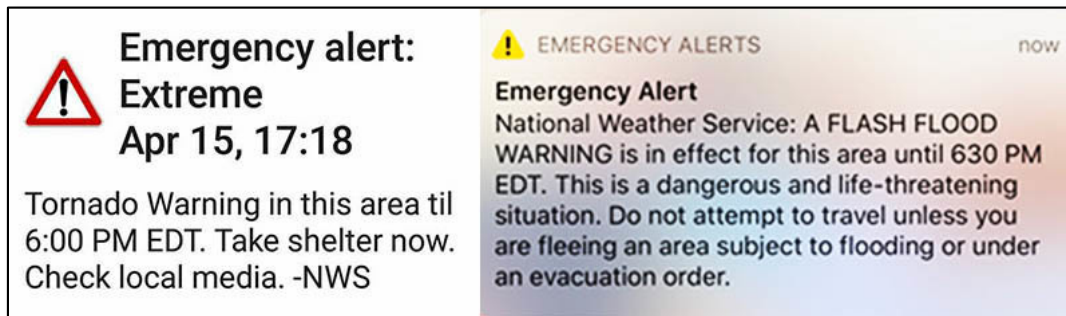
Event Codes do not appear on mobile phones, except in alerts sent by NWS (see NWS WEA examples on the next page), and in cases where alert origination software does not support free-form WEA text or allow the Alert Originator to override WEA text. Note: Most alerting software supports free-form text.



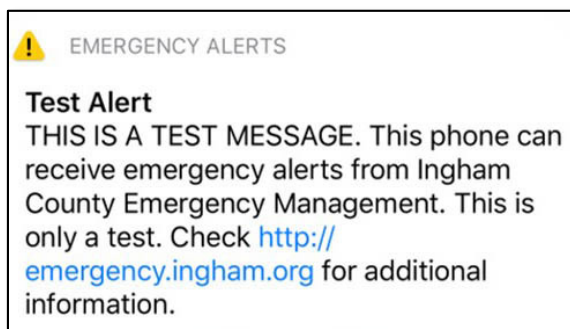
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NWS WEAs

NWS WEAs are automated and include the Event Code, spelled out, in both the 90- and 360-character alerts. In these examples, the Event Codes are **TOR** (Tornado Warning) and **FFW** (Flash Flood Warning).



Test WEAs



Event Code **RWT** (Required Weekly Test) may be used to test WEAs without obtaining a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) waiver. This does not mean that alerting authorities are required to perform weekly tests of WEA. RWT is simply an approved Event Code to perform tests of WEA.

Before performing any live tests, the IPAWS PMO encourages Alerting Authorities to practice with IPAWS Lab personnel. Only those phones opted-in will receive the test WEA.

Event Codes in Emergency Alert System Messages



Event Codes *do* appear in EAS messages, particularly within a TV scroll. Be cautious when using **EVI** (Immediate Evacuation) or **SPW** (Shelter in Place) for an EAS alert, since the initial alert on-screen display will appear to apply to the entire county.

This may result in public confusion if an order is intended for a small area of a county. For example: "A CIVIL AUTHORITY HAS ISSUED AN EVACUATION IMMEDIATE FOR THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES / AREAS:..."

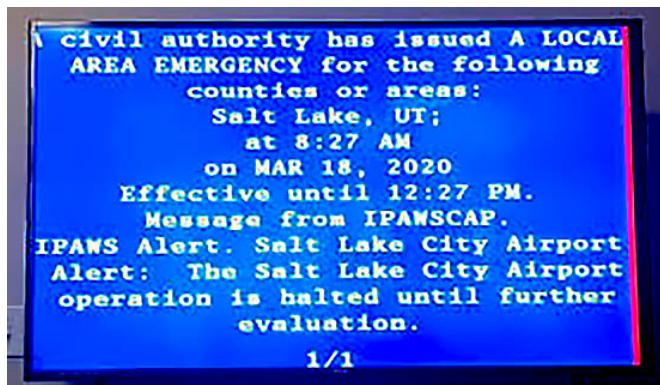
Take care to avoid ambiguity, particularly in large counties and neighboring counties where stations may monitor adjoining jurisdiction(s). It can cause undue concern and overload to 911 call centers or an EOC.

Note: EAS broadcast by TV and radio stations is voluntary and Alerting Authorities will want to coordinate with local broadcasters to ensure their messages are carried.

In situations where notification to the public is important, but not an imminent concern, it may be best to consider use of Event Codes such as **LAE** (Local Area Emergency). If LAE is selected, the message will display: "A CIVIL

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AUTHORITY HAS ISSUED A LOCAL AREA EMERGENCY FOR THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES / AREAS:..." Then, if received via IPAWS, the message description will display the action needed.



IPAWS Tips at Your Fingertips

Find all Tips from 2018 to the present, in [IPAWS Tips](#) on the FEMA website.

If you would like the PMO to cover a specific topic in these IPAWS Tips, please share your ideas at ipaws@fema.dhs.gov.