

Washington State EAS Plan - Tab 8
Non-Weather Related EAS Emergency Event Code Descriptions
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Introduction

This tab provides descriptive guidelines used for 17 non-weather related EAS emergency events. These guidelines were adapted from a National Weather Service (NWS) working group, the Houston Local Emergency Communications Committee and NWS Directive 10-518 (www.nws.noaa.gov/directives).

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on February 22, 2002, adopted a Report and Order (FCC-02-64) giving local and state Emergency Alert System (EAS) committees the option of utilizing new event codes for non-weather related events. (The FCC Report and Order can be downloaded from the FCC's Electronic Document Management System (EDOCS) at: http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/.)

Message Description Guidance

This guidance was provided by the State Emergency Communication Committee (SECC) and Local Emergency Communication Committees (LECC) and local authorized EAS message originators are encouraged to follow these guidelines to provide statewide and national consistent use of these codes.

A warning or watch is normally issued only once to provide initial notification (alert) of the event. A new warning or watch should be issued if the hazard or recommended public protective action(s) has expanded into another county or geographic zone, or if the valid time has been extended. All other updates or cancellations of the event should be sent as a non-emergency Administrative Message (ADR) or by other means (e.g., telephone, fax, e-mail, or media briefings) to local news media outlets.

Non-Weather Related Emergency Messages

This section provides the recommended definitions of non-weather related events. Most of these event codes are self-explanatory, yet are explained to ensure consistency of use by all EAS message originators.

Administrative Message (ADR)

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. A good example for use of this event code is cancellation of an Amber Alert.

Avalanche Watch (AVA)

A message issued by authorized officials when conditions are forecast to become favorable for natural or human-triggered avalanches that could affect roadways, structures, or backcountry activities.

Avalanche Warning (AVW)

A warning of current or imminent avalanche activity when avalanche danger is considered high or extreme. Authorized officials may recommend or order protective actions according to state law or local ordinance when natural or human-triggered avalanches are likely to affect roadways, structures, or backcountry activities.

Child Abduction Emergency (CAE)

An emergency message, based on statewide established criteria, about a missing child believed to be abducted. A local or state law enforcement agency investigating the abduction 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. For cancellation of an Amber Alert, use the ADR event code.

Civil Danger Warning (CDW)

A warning of an event that presents a danger to a significant civilian population. The CDW, which usually warns of a specific hazard and gives specific protective action, has a higher priority than the Local Area Emergency (LAE). Examples include contaminated water supply and imminent or in-progress military or terrorist attack. Public protective actions could include evacuation, shelter in place, or other actions (such as boiling contaminated water or seeking medical treatment). If cancellation of a CDW is needed, use the ADR event code.

Civil Emergency Message (CEM)

An emergency message regarding an in-progress or imminent significant threat(s) 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 the Homeland Security alert System level in response to a terrorist threat. If cancellation of a CEM is needed, use the ADR event code.

Earthquake Warning (EQW)

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

Evacuation Immediate (EVI)

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 affected areas and where to move due to an approaching tsunami. In the event a flammable or explosive gas release, authorized officials may recommend evacuation of designated areas where casualties or property damage from a vapor cloud explosion or fire may occur.

Fire Warning (FRW)

A warning of a spreading wildfire or structural 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.

Hazardous Materials Warning (HMW)

A warning of the release of a 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). If cancellation of a HMW is needed, use the ADR event code.

Law Enforcement Warning (LEW)

A warning of a bomb explosion, riot, or other criminal event (e.g. a jailbreak). An authorized law enforcement agency may blockade roads, waterways, or facilities, evacuate or deny access to affected areas, and arrest violators or suspicious persons. If cancellation of a LEW is needed, use the ADR event code.

Local Area Emergency (LAE)

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, road closures due to excessive snowfall, or a potential terrorist threat where the public is asked to remain alert. If cancellation of a LAE is needed, use the ADR event code.

911 Telephone Outage Emergency (TOE)

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

Nuclear Power Plant Warning (NUW)

A warning of an event at a nuclear power plant classified such 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 off-site 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. If cancellation of a NUW is needed, use the ADR event code.

Radiological Hazard Warning (RHW)

A warning of the loss, discovery, or release of a radiological hazard. Examples include: the theft of a radioactive isotope used for medical, seismic, or other purposes; the discovery of radioactive

materials; a transportation (aircraft, truck or rail, etc.) accident which may involve nuclear weapons, nuclear fuel, or radioactive wastes. Authorized officials may recommend protective actions to be taken if a radioactive hazard is discovered. If cancellation of a RHW is needed, use the ADR event code.

Shelter in Place Warning (SPW)

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, apply plastic and duct tape to doors, windows and vent openings) and turn on a radio, NOAA Weather Radio or TV for more information). An example is the release of hazardous materials where toxic fumes or radioactivity may affect designated areas. If cancellation of a SPW is needed, use the ADR event code.

Volcano Warning (VOW)

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