



Winter weather system checklist for public safety

Helping emergency managers prepare for winter storms

Emergency managers face a multitude of considerations when preparing for winter weather. From monitoring weather forecasts and road conditions to coordinating shelter openings and mobilizing resources, the preparations are extensive.

The central component to many of these preparations hinges upon an effective emergency notification system. Without a solid system in place, vital components to public safety such as, public education campaigns, multi-language support, accessibility, system redundancy, and regular training and testing cannot be properly performed. With so many aspects to address, the crucial question is:

How ready is your emergency notification system to effectively support communication during a winter storm?



Use this checklist to ensure your emergency notification system is able and ready to support you and your people during winter weather.

Public education and outreach

- Plan public education campaigns to promote awareness of the notification system and encourage community members to sign up for alerts.
- Ensure the system offers multiple ways to receive alerts, such as opting in via keyword, registering in a special registry, through social media, or a mobile app.

Resident data

- Verify the availability of wireless, landline, and VoIP numbers for your jurisdiction with your system provider.
- Assess the percentage of your community that can be reached in case of an emergency.

Communication channels

- Confirm that the notification system can send alerts through multiple communication channels, including text messages, emails, social media, and automated voice calls.
- Explore other supported modes of communication such as mobile apps, Google Public Alerts, and web page publishing.

Two-way communication

- Evaluate the capability for two-way communication from the public and response teams.
- Assess if the system can be used to gather information quickly, such as identifying those in need of assistance or obtaining important information from your team.

Messages

- Ensure the system supports message templates and workflows tailored for specific winter storm scenarios, including road closures, shelter openings, and safety advisories.

- Review the clarity and effectiveness of public alert messaging and confirm if the system allows for consistent, error-free messaging.

Automation and scheduling

- Confirm the system's ability to automate location-specific winter weather alerts.
- Ensure the capability to schedule and send routine updates and safety tips at regular intervals before, during, and after the storm.
- Assess whether the system allows the public to customize the types of weather alerts they receive and the frequency of updates.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

- Verify that the system supports messaging in multiple languages to accommodate diverse populations within your community.
- Ensure compliance with accessibility standards, including support for individuals with disabilities and dissemination of information in formats accessible to individuals with visual or hearing impairments.

IPAWS

- If applicable, ensure the system has successfully demonstrated its IPAWS capabilities to FEMA for delivering CAP-compliant messages to the public via Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

Redundancy and reliability

- Verify redundancy measures, such as backup message senders and redundant communication pathways, to ensure system reliability during power outages or network disruptions.
- Assess the ability to use the emergency notification system as a backup for other communication channels and confirm the availability of a 24/7 Live Operator for message delivery.

Reporting and analytics

- Ensure the capability to generate reports on message delivery, open rates, and audience engagement for post-event analysis and improvement.

By addressing these items, you can ensure that your notification system is well-equipped to support effective communication before, during, and after a winter storm, thereby enhancing public safety and resilience.

Every community has its unique differences and needs, and we know that this checklist only serves as a basic guide in assessing and improving the readiness of an emergency notification system for winter weather scenarios.

For a more comprehensive consultation about your needs and capabilities of your emergency notification system – reach out to us directly.