

CT ALERT EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM POLICY

April 19, 2012

PURPOSE AND SCOPE: The purpose of this document is to provide a general policy on the use and administration of the CT Alert Emergency Notification System (CT Alert ENS). In addition to this policy, each authorized user agency shall set up a more specific written procedure, containing certain minimum criteria including: (1) description of covered entity; (2) message drafting and approval process, and (3) notification flow. For municipalities, this procedure will be added to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) checklist for the annual review of the Local Emergency Operations Plan. Examples of such procedures are available as templates and best practices. **The written procedure of any authorized user agency must be in compliance with this policy.**

It should also be noted that an emergency notification system (ENS) is just one means of providing warnings or alerts to the public. The ENS should be used in conjunction with all components of a public warning system as necessary in a particular situation.

ACTIVATION CRITERIA: Title 28 of the Connecticut General Statutes limits the use of the state E-911 database for emergency notification systems to cases of emergency. In any given instance, the facts and circumstances particular to that incident will define an emergency. There are any number of situations in which public alerting may be necessary. While the determination of whether a matter is an emergency is a discretionary decision, the following criteria may help to determine the need to issue an alert:

- *Severity.* Is there a significant threat to one or more individual's life or safety?
- *Public Protection.* Is there a need for members of the public to take a protective action in order to reduce harm or loss of life?
- *Warning.* Will providing warning information assist members of the public in making the decision to take proper and prudent actions to increase safety?
- *Timing.* Does the situation require immediate public knowledge in order to avoid adverse impact to life or safety?
- *Geographic Area.* Is the situation limited to a defined geographic area? Is that area of a size that will allow for effective use of the system, given the outgoing call capacity?
- Are other means of disseminating the information inadequate to ensure proper and timely delivery of the information?

The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Office of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (OSET), has developed a CT Alert Best Practice Guideline Document, which is available at the OSET website located at the following link: <http://www.ct.gov/despp/cwp/view.asp?a=4153&q=494178>.

Examples of possible appropriate use of the ENS with the E-911 database include but are not limited to the following:

- Natural disasters such as dangerous water conditions, fires, severe weather;
- Man-made disasters such as bomb threats, HazMat emergencies, terrorism threats;
- Crime situations such as prisoner escapes;
- Search and Rescue situations involving missing children, elderly, other endangered persons;
- Evacuation notices and/or routes;
- Public health threats such as contaminated drinking water, infectious disease outbreaks, rabid animal alert.

ACTIVATION AUTHORITY: Depending on the particular event, an incident commander may include a fire or police official, public health official, emergency management director, emergency medical services chief, or other public safety official who is commanding the management of an incident. Any authorized incident commander who determines that an ENS message needs to be sent may activate the system. At the request of an incident commander, an authorized, trained user (e.g., a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dispatcher, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection State Police Message Center dispatcher, **or authorized user at the State Emergency Operations Center**) will, using the information provided by the incident commander, initiate the ENS to provide the notification requested. The authorized user shall verify the message with the incident commander or otherwise as needed. **The PSAP(s) in the affected area(s) shall be notified of the content of the message prior to initiation of the ENS.**

A state agency that determines that an ENS message needs to be sent may also activate the system through an authorized, trained user. Approval of the Governor or his/her designee is required, unless a critical life safety threat is imminent.

NOTIFICATION OF ACTIVATION: The authorized user who initiates the CT Alert ENS shall provide notification of the activation of the system to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Emergency Management Director (EMD) of each jurisdiction affected by the ENS notification as soon as possible after activation. For example, if the ENS message is sent to all or some of the citizens of three municipalities, the CEOs and EMDs of all three municipalities must be notified by the authorized user. This initial notification shall occur from the originating PSAP, or other authorized user, to all PSAPs affected by the activation, and shall include the ENS message. The affected PSAPs shall then ensure that the CEOs, EMDs, Fire, Police and EMS Chiefs in the affected communities are notified of the activation. Each EMD must then notify the DEMHS Regional Coordinator, and any other official appropriate to the incident (e.g., local public health director). The commercial provider of the ENS service shall provide notification of activation of the system to all system administrators, the DESPP OSET, and the DEMHS Director of Emergency Management.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW:


Any public safety answering point and / or municipality using the E9-1-1 database provided by the State of Connecticut to broadcast alerts utilizing an emergency notification system other than the CT Alert ENS is required to submit a report of each broadcast to OSET. The report shall include, but not be limited to the following: who authorized the alert; who sent the alert; who was alerted; why the alert was sent; and the content of the message that was sent.

A template for use in preparing this report will be provided by OSET and is available at the OSET website. The completed report will be reviewed by a subcommittee composed of the CT Alert ENS administrators. The subcommittee will provide the finding of its review to the E911 Commission.

The ENS Working Group will convene annually to review the policy for any updates or changes.



Reuben F. Bradford, Commissioner
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Date