

LECC GUIDELINES

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 2
LECC Goals	Page 2
LECC Composition	Page 2
LECC Member Responsibilities	Page 3
Practical Hints for an LECC Chair	Page 4
LECC Meetings	Page 4
LECC Communications	Page 4
LECC and Public Relations	Page 4
LECC’s Primary Responsibilities	Page 5
Plan Recommendations – the Document Structure	Page 5
Plan Recommendations – the Contents	Page 5
Other LECC Matters and Responsibilities - Emergency Message Distribution	Page 6
TIPS for Working with EAS.....	Page 6
LECCs and the Testing of EAS	Page 7
How to Choose a Local Primary (LP)	Page 7
What are the Criteria for Choosing an LP?	Page 8
Amendments to this Document	Page 9

INTRODUCTION

LECC stands for Local Emergency Communications Committee. The term originated years ago as part of efforts to provide structure for the then-new Emergency Alert System (EAS).

The LECC is an advisory body that, in cooperation with local emergency managers, relevant governmental agencies, broadcasters, and others, recommends best practices for determining when and how to originate and disseminate local alert and warning messaging (EAS, WEA, etc.).

The Washington State EAS Plan calls for an LECC in each of the operational areas in the State. These committees are the steering bodies for public alert and warning systems in each of these areas. LECCs work with the State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC) and are part of that body.

These guidelines are established to help LECCs understand their role in alerting and warning the public via the various systems available.

LECC GOALS

The goals of the LECC are to routinely discuss and revise policies and procedures governing the use of public alert and warning systems, and to evaluate the overall use of emergency communications in the community.

LECC COMPOSITION

Because public alert and warning in Washington State is a cooperative effort, stakeholders in this process include government agencies that are sources of public warning messages, plus those associated with the systems used to communicate those messages to the public.

Each operational area (see the Washington State EAS Plan for description of operational areas) may include one or more counties and cities, radio, television, and cable systems and other entities that are unique to that operational area. There are no defined parties. Representation on the LECC shall be determined by the members of the LECC, with the goal of making sure that there is adequate representation in public warning planning in the operational area. The SECC does not appoint parties to an LECC: Those decisions are left to the stakeholders of the LECC.

Typically, LECC's include representatives from county and, where applicable, city and Tribal governments, emergency management, law enforcement, and 911 centers (Public Safety Answering Points or PSAPs). LECCs can also include technical and management representatives from radio and TV broadcast stations, cable systems,

landline telephone companies, wireless carriers, etc. Other entities and organizations such as Amateur Radio groups, industrial facilities, and disaster relief organizations can be part of an LECC.

The LECC has additional responsibilities as part of the overall Washington State Public Alert and Warning System, as determined by the SECC and the LECC. Those responsibilities are outlined below.

LECC MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The functions of an LECC are not a one-person job. It is vital that tasks and responsibilities be spread among the members. This assures ownership of the processes by all participants, and that no one person should find that working with and for the Committee becomes a burden. Here are some recommendations:

*The LECC should have a Chair and a Vice-Chair. These officers are responsible for conducting meetings. They are also the primary contact persons for the committee. The LECC Chair is automatically a member of the SECC. (See Practical Hints for a LECC Chair below).

*An Administrative Assistant. Duties include providing a written record of meetings, maintaining the roster of members, and conducting correspondence.

*A Technical Committee should be assigned to resolve technical issues as a resource to the LECC and its members. The committee is also usually responsible for maintenance and operation of any Analog/Legacy Local Relay Network (LRN) systems.

*A person should be appointed to keep track of all FCC-licensed facilities in the operational area, functioning as a liaison to the party who works with the SECC to create and maintain Monitoring Assignments.

*As the role of an LECC continues to expand to include diverse modes of notification, it is recommended that the LECC evaluate the communication's effectiveness and assure that best practices are followed.

*A liaison to the SECC. This can be the chair or another person designated by the LECC. His or her responsibility is to ensure ongoing communication between the LECC and the SECC. The most important thing to remember is that EAS and related systems are public warning tools whose bottom-line purpose is to preserve life when an emergency occurs.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR THE LECC CHAIR

It is suggested that the Chair read and review the State EAS Plan at the following link and become familiar with its contents:

<https://mil.wa.gov/other-links/emergency-alert-system-eas-state-plan>

The Chair is also urged to read the latest revision to the State AMBER Alert Plan (Tab 26): <https://mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/EAS-state-plan/amber%20alert%20guidelines.pdf>

For on-going reference, it's recommended that this and other Tabs be printed out (preferably double-sided, to save paper) for future reference, and then placed in a 3-ring binder separated by physical tabs.

It is also recommended that the Chair is familiar with the national alerting system called IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert and Warning System) and consider taking the online Independent Study courses relating to IPAWS through FEMA:

<https://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx>

LECC MEETINGS

The LECC should meet at regular intervals, at locations mutually agreeable to stakeholders. Where geography is an issue, meetings may be conducted via electronic means. Meetings should not conflict with meetings of the SECC, which are typically held in January, March, May, July, September, and November.

LECC COMMUNICATIONS

LECC's are welcome to use the Washington State EAS Remailer (listserv) to make meeting announcements, ask questions, make requests for support, distribute minutes, and other communications deemed appropriate by the SECC.

LECC AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The LECC is encouraged to work with government public affairs departments, as well as the print and electronic news media, to inform the public of the work of the LECC, what it means, and to help residents understand the system. It's important to note that residents are told with every test of the EAS that they will receive official information if there is an emergency. They need to know how they will receive the information and where they can find it.

- LECCs are encouraged to include Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations as they develop and implement alert and warning procedures.
- LECCs are encouraged to work with local speakers' bureaus and other entities to spread the word about the work of coordinating public warnings.

LECC's PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The goal is to have all stakeholders work to develop and maintain a local area Public Alert and Warning Plan. This plan should spell out in detail:

- When public alert and warning systems should be used and how to use them. For instance, EAS (Legacy and CAP), IPAWS, WEA, automatic telephone messaging, etc.
- The Plan should also describe when and how to use the various event codes as specified in the Washington State EAS Plan, Tab 8:
https://mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/EAS-state-plan/eas_tab_8-event_codes_5_25_17.pdf

The LECC plan is an active document and should be kept current. The local plan is to be available online, with the URL communicated to the SECC for inclusion on its Website, and to be provided in printed form for those who prefer a physical copy. All finalized plans shall be submitted to the SECC for its approval.

The LECC is encouraged to use the State EAS Plan format available on-line at the Washington State Emergency Management Division (WSEMD) as a model to insure consistency within the State:

<https://mil.wa.gov/other-links/emergency-alert-system-eas-state-plan>

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS – THE DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

When the Washington State EAS Plan was being developed, it was determined that the plan would be housed in a 3-ring binder and consist of two major segments: First, the EAS Plan policy narrative and second, a series of tabs containing specific information subject to frequent changes. This eliminates the need to duplicate the entire volume each time a change is made. The LECC Plan is to be configured such that it can be printed and placed in a binder, like the Washington State Plan.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS – THE CONTENTS

A local area Public Alert and Warning Plan should contain the following items:

*An explanation of the Plan. The goal is to have a document that anyone can read and understand exactly how the systems work in the area.

*A roster of all members of the LECC, using the Washington State Plan Tab 1 or 2 as a model.

*An easy-to-understand list of who is authorized to initiate public alert and warning messages within the operational area.

*A section showing the various public alert and warning systems, including when and how they are to be used, while respecting government agency relationships.

*A Link to the State EAS Plan:

<https://mil.wa.gov/other-links/emergency-alert-system-eas-state-plan>

*A current list of the applicable State EAS Plan Tab 10 (monitoring assignments).

*Other documents as deemed helpful and appropriate by the LECC.

OTHER LECC MATTERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES - EMERGENCY MESSAGE DISTRIBUTION

The LECC should be aware of three EAS message distribution methods in each Operational Area:

*Digital Messages - These are digital messages generated by a designated government entity utilizing the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), which are distributed to EAS participants via IPAWS and/or The Washington State CAP System. These Emergency Notification Systems (ENS) usually utilize a “front-end” system/software from a commercial vendor.

*Analog Messages via Local Relay Network (LRN) - These are analog messages generated by a designated government entity utilizing a device capable of generating a message utilizing the SAME (Specific Area Message Encoding) system, which is distributed to EAS Participants via a LRN. Creation of and maintenance and operational readiness of the Local Relay Network is the responsibility of the LECC.

*Analog Messages via Local Primary (LP) - These are analog messages generated by a designated government entity utilizing a device capable of generating a message utilizing the SAME system, which is then sent to a Local Primary, which is responsible for distribution to EAS Participants via an off-air monitoring arrangement (see section on How to Choose a Local Primary).

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH EAS

The LECC Chair’s job is to ensure EAS and related systems work as well as they can in an operational area. It means promoting effective communication among all stakeholders in the area – emergency managers, 911 directors, radio and TV broadcasters, cable systems, wireless carriers, and others as appropriate. It also includes exchanging email and phone calls, in-person visits to the participants, and occasional in-person meetings. Listening effectively to others is a most important tool. The LECC Chair acts as a coordinator and problem solver.

For difficult issues, LECC Chairs can find assistance on the Washington EAS Remailer (listserv). This serves as a forum for information exchange, notices of SECC meetings, distribution of the RMT schedule, getting answers to questions, etc. The signup link: <http://sea.sbe16.org/mailman/listinfo/eas-wa>

Once subscribed, use the email eas-wa@sbe16.org for posting messages. DO NOT CC any other address – your message will likely get bounced. NOTE: You may choose to receive individual messages, or a digest at the end of the day. The latter option keeps your Inbox uncluttered, but the digest does not include attachments, such as the Required Monthly Test (RMT) Schedule.

Part of the LECC Chair's job is to remind EAS originators that they're scheduled to send Required Monthly Tests, or RMTs (Tab 11). Note the following language, which gives the LECC Chair authority to make sure an RMT doesn't fall through the cracks (this language is part of Tab 11):

“In the event a Local Area Primary is unable to originate a scheduled RMT, it will contact the WSEMD (800-258-5990) and provide the necessary language and FIPS codes to originate the RMT on the agency's behalf. LECC chairs may also contact the WSEMD to request this assistance. WSEMD will confirm language and FIPS codes with the agency prior to originating the substitute RMT. The Local Area Chair is also authorized to verify with WSEMD that the substitute RMT has been scheduled.”

Another task of the Chair is to troubleshoot RMTs when they fail or have problems. The Remailer is particularly helpful in running down such problems. The goal is to resolve message issues BEFORE an actual emergency happens.

LECCs AND TESTING OF EAS

The FCC requires that all broadcast licensees perform specific tests of EAS. The SECC provides the opportunity for each operational area to participate in testing at the local level. As outlined elsewhere in this document, the LECC is responsible for ensuring that local authorities originate scheduled monthly tests. Authorities should be encouraged to assign duties on a rotating basis to make sure their staff members are trained and ready to complete these duties during an emergency.

HOW TO CHOOSE A LOCAL PRIMARY (LP)

In this document, the term “LP” means “Local Primary” and should not be confused with the term LP used to describe a low-power broadcast station.

In the event the Operational Area does not have a fully functional LRN, it may elect to utilize a Local Primary (LP) facility to perform the task of relaying public alert and warning messages to EAS Participants. Should the LECC be faced with having to select

a new broadcast facility to function as LP, as either an LP1 or LP2, the following guidelines are designed to assist the committee in that process.

An LP is usually, but not always, a broadcast station within an Operational Area that other stations in that area monitor for national, state, or local EAS Messages. An LP2 is a redundant or backup facility.

The main difference between an LP and other stations within an area is what they monitor. LPs monitor multiple sources of National Level EAS messages, in accordance with Tabs 5 and 6 of the State Plan.

The FCC requires that all broadcast stations relay all National Level EAS messages in real-time. However, there is no FCC regulation governing the forwarding of other public alert and warning messages. The LECC should receive assurances from the LP facility that it will forward all locally-generated EAS messages with minimum delay.

Some facilities may be operating unattended during certain times, with their EAS equipment in automatic mode. The LECC should fully understand how messages transmitted to these facilities are handled when operating in this mode.

Once a decision is made by the LECC to create a new LP for an operational area, that decision must be conveyed to the WA State ECC for inclusion in the Monitoring Matrix (Tabs 5 & 6).

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING AN LP?

Choosing an LP is based on several factors, and a comparative scoring-matrix is suggested. The facility having the highest score would typically be the LP1 and the second highest would be the LP2. The following are some elements that should be considered in the scoring:

*Hours of Operation

Public alert and warning messages require a 24/7/365 delivery system. The broadcast station used must be one that operates continuously. This eliminates consideration of daytime-only stations (those that sign off at local sunset or those that normally cease transmission at a specific hour).

*Coverage

The mission of an LP is to relay EAS messages to broadcasters, cable systems, etc. within an Operational Area. Therefore, an LP must have the coverage permitting this, and required coverage will vary with the size of the Operational Area. It should be noted that many AM broadcast stations either reduce power or use a directional antenna system during hours of darkness. This factor affects coverage and must be considered in making decisions.

*Level of cooperation

The LP facility should be willing to be actively participate in the distribution of public warning messages for the Operational Area and provide assurance of that to the LECC.

*Required equipment

The LP facility should have or be willing to purchase additional equipment necessary to fulfill the mission of an LP.

*Redundancy

Being able to fulfill the function of an LP during adverse conditions is a plus. Facilities that have redundant capabilities should be scored higher.

*Auxiliary Power

Emergency power generation for the equipment to maintain service during times of power outages is a must. Does the facility have auxiliary power at its studio and transmitter locations? How long can it operate without commercial power before fuel must be resupplied?

*Redundant equipment

Does the facility have sufficient redundant equipment to maintain operation if there are failures to its primary equipment?

*Co-Location Issues

Co-location of an LP1 and LP2 is strongly discouraged.

*Facility survivability

Particularly in Western Washington, this factor should be seriously considered in choosing an LP. For example, facilities in areas prone to flooding should be on high ground.

The LECC should be careful not to avoid a good LP station while waiting for a great one. There are many stations that don't have ideal redundancy, but should be encouraged to become LPs. Willingness is the first quality we should seek.

AMENDMENTS TO THIS DOCUMENT

As is the case with all documents and/or Tabs used with the Washington State EAS Plan, this document can be changed, updated, or improved as required. All such changes shall be subject to the review of all EAS Participants within the State of Washington, with final approval resting with the SECC.