



# Communications Processes and Systems

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# Outline

- Houston OEM Overview
- Blue-sky preparedness and communications
- Grey-sky preparedness, enhanced awareness notifications, and alerting
- Black-sky warnings, immediate action notifications, and alerting



# City of Houston OEM Mission

- OEM is responsible for coordinating preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts for emergencies and disasters within the city.
- Our Mission: We are committed to safeguarding everyone who lives, works, and plays in Houston against all hazards and threats.
  - Partnerships: city, local, regional, state, and federal agencies



# Duty Officer Program

- Rotation of emergency on-call contact 24/7/365
  - NOT the same as a 24-hour watch officer
- Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines
- Daily responsibilities
  - Planned/special events
  - Monitoring weather, partner notifications
  - Brief OEM Leadership on significant events, incidents



# Blue-Sky Communications Preparedness





# Preparedness

- Preparedness 365 - *culture*
  - **Houstonoem.org** (Fall 2024 Refresh)
  - **Social media:** preparedness and awareness
  - **Outreach:** presentations and booths
    - 18 events and 1,100+ attendees in June 2025
  - **Media engagement:** regular communication with TV, print, and radio outlets
    - 11 media inquiries, 7 on-camera interviews in June 2025



# Preparedness

- Preparedness 365 – culture
  - **New PSA's**
    - Be Prepared. Be Safe. Be AlertHouston
      - Promoting the new website, STEAR enrollment, AlertHouston, and preparedness
  - **Website Enhancements**
    - Available in Houston's six main languages, ADA compliant, user friendly)
  - **New Register Option:** Text "AlertHouston" to 888777



# QR Code with all Houston OEM Resources



- Visit [HoustonOEM.org](https://HoustonOEM.org)
- Register for AlertHouston or STEAR
- View digital Disaster Preparedness Guides in your preferred language
- Follow our Social Media pages
- Request a presentation or booth from our team





# Grey-Sky Communications Enhanced Awareness and Alerts



# Enhanced Awareness and Alerts

- Enhanced Blue-Sky methods
- Interviews and media inquiries
- AlertHouston and STEAR notifications
- Stand up the Joint Information Center:
  - Ensures consistent and accurate messaging
  - Brings together PIOs from multiple agencies
  - Reduces misinformation and rumor spread
  - Enhances public trust through coordinated communication



# Alert Houston

- Target audience – ***public, voluntary enrollment***
- Enhanced awareness
- Encouraged/voluntary actions
- Since August 2025
  - 5 Total Messages
    - Winter Weather: Jan 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>
    - HFD Prescribed burn: March 13<sup>th</sup>
    - Severe thunderstorms: May 2<sup>nd</sup>



# STEAR (State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry)

- Target audience: ***vulnerable communities, voluntary enrollment***
- Enhanced awareness
- Encouraged/voluntary actions
- Post incident wellness/assistance check
- Use Since August 2025
  - Seven Total Messages
    - Five – Winter Weather 2025
    - Two – Hurricane Preparedness



# Black-Sky Communications Warnings and Immediate Action





# IPAWS – FEMA Tool

America's  
System for Local  
Emergency Alerts



- Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is a tool that Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (FSLTT) public safety agencies can use to notify the public of disasters and deliver emergency and public safety information.
- FSLTT public safety agencies can sign up to become an Alerting Authority (Requirements).
- Examples: Amber Alerts, NWS Alerts, Public Safety Alerts.



# IPAWS Vs. AlertHouston

## IPAWS

- Sent to all phones in the geo-targeted area
- Supports English and Spanish languages
- Supports clickable URLs
- Ongoing retransmission of WEA for duration of the alert
- Ability to update and/or cancel active WEA
- Unique tone and vibration
- No need to opt in to receive WEA
  - Residents can “TURN OFF”
- Not affected by network congestion and will not disrupt texts
- No tracking of individuals by phone number.

## AlertHouston

- Must subscribe, opt-in
- Track delivery and feedback
- Support clickable URLs
- Sent in English and Spanish languages
- Ongoing retransmission for duration of the alert
- Target/limited distribution lists



# IPAWS – Main Pathways

- Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)
  - Cell phone
- Emergency Alert System (EAS)
  - Radio and Television
- NOAA Weather Radio



# IPAWS Examples

America's  
System for Local  
Emergency Alerts



- Partner Alert Examples
  - Tornado Warning
  - Flash Flood Warning
  - Hurricane Warning
  - Ice Storm Warning
  - AMBER Alerts
- Houston OEM Examples
  - Citywide Emergencies
  - Evacuation Orders
  - Shelter-in-Place Emergencies





## Emergency Alert

- Imminent – immediate action to preserve life or property
- Public Safety – non-life threatening, provide benefit

## Description

- Hurricane Amy, Category 5 storm, 175 mph wind, 18-20' storm surge.

## Action Time

- Zone B Mandatory evacuation begins at 6pm



City of Houston Office of Emergency Management

## Location

Life safety storm surge, Mandatory Evacuation for Zone B; City of Houston zip codes: 77058 ; 77062 ; 77059 ; 77598 ; 77546

## Action

Implement your evacuation plan (kit, route, etc.) and safely evacuate Zone B





# COH OEM Public Notification Pathways



- AlertHouston and STEAR (opt-in)
- Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) (opt-out)
- Amplification of messages on social media and traditional media.



# Thank you!

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