

New statewide emergency notification system launched

DES MOINES – A new statewide emergency notification system was launched today at the Iowa Homeland Security Conference in Des Moines.

Governor Terry E. Brandstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds joined Mark Schouten, director of the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD), to launch the Alert Iowa system.

Alert Iowa was developed by HSEMD to provide all counties with access to a single, statewide notification system that provides local control of how and when to disseminate emergency and public safety messages to residents. While many counties already use an emergency notification system, they may elect to switch to Alert Iowa, for which there is no charge to use.

Residents in counties where Alert Iowa is used will be able to choose the types of alerts they receive, such as for severe weather, 9-1-1 outages or winter storms. Alerts can be sent to residents via landline and wireless phone, text messaging, email, FAX, TTY/TDD, and social media. Photo, video, audio and links may be included in the alerts to help recipients better understand the situation or where to go to get additional information.

In addition, Alert Iowa utilizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) to send imminent emergency and public safety messages through the Emergency Alert System, NOAA Weather Radio and the Wireless Emergency Alerts system. Using IPAWS for state and local alerts will be another method to ensure the most urgent information is delivered to as many Iowans as possible when an emergency is happening and requires the public to take immediate action.

Planning for Alert Iowa began in early 2013 when it was determined that 53 counties were paying nearly \$600,000 for their individual notification systems, while 15 used a free system with limited capabilities. Thirty-one counties did not have an emergency notification system, which in many cases was due to a lack of funding. Alert Iowa funding was appropriated to HSEMD by the Iowa General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor earlier this year. Alert Iowa provides emergency notification capability to all 99 counties for half the cost the 53 counties paid for their notification systems. There is no requirement that counties use this system.

Currently, about one-third of the state's counties have signed up to use Alert Iowa. It is expected the remainder of counties will come on board in the near future. As counties begin to use the system, they will notify residents and provide instruction on how to sign up for alerts.

For information on Alert Iowa visit the [HSEMD website](#). A map showing counties currently signed up to use the system is also available here.

(Continued: New statewide emergency notification system launched – Oct. 21, 2014)

The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management leads, coordinates and supports homeland security and emergency management functions in order to establish sustainable communities and ensure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

###