

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: February 18, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Cassandra Libal, Director, Office of Emergency Management

Subject: From the Director, Office of Emergency Management providing an Informational Report regarding the "Shelter in Place" Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) on January 26, 2022.

File Type: Informational Report

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**REQUEST**

To provide the Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning Committee with an Informational Report regarding "Shelter in Place" Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) on January 26, 2022.

**BACKGROUND**

Milwaukee County's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has Alerting Authority for FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). This allows OEM to send out local emergency messages to all Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)-capable mobile devices in a designated geographical area.

Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) is a partnership among FEMA, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and wireless providers to enhance public safety.

The types of alerts include:

- **Presidential Alerts** are a special class of alerts only sent during a national emergency. (Sent federally)
- **Imminent Threat Alerts** include natural or human-made disasters, extreme weather, active shooters, and other threatening emergencies that are current or emerging.
- **Public Safety Alerts** contain information about a threat that may not be imminent or after an imminent threat has occurred. Public safety alerts are less severe than imminent threat alerts.
- **America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Alerts** are urgent bulletins issued in child-abduction cases. Rapid and effective public alerts often play a crucial role in returning a missing child safely. An AMBER Alert instantly enables the entire community to assist in the search for and safe recovery of the child.

Wireless providers primarily use cell broadcast technology for WEA message delivery.

Although messages can be designated for a specific geographic area, the span of the message is contingent upon the broadcast area of the cell tower and user upgrades.

As the locally authorized partner, OEM reserves the right to limit or expand the target area of a message.

### **BODY**

On January 26<sup>th</sup> 2022, a “Shelter In Place” WEA was issued countywide based on evaluating the following safety concerns.

- Risks to Community
  - Armed suspect, firearm discharged, likely to be seeking shelter and/or transportation
- Day of week/time of day
  - Approaching weekday commute time (4:00am)
- Proximity of incident to main thoroughfares
  - within 1 mile radius/ ≈ 20 minutes walking
  - I-94, Bluemound Rd, Wisconsin Ave, Greenfield Ave, 76<sup>th</sup> St., Hawley Rd
- Multiple jurisdictions
  - Milwaukee, West Allis, Wauwatosa & West Milwaukee
- Proximity to school zones
  - Burbank Elementary (6035 W. Adler)
  - MacDowell Montessori (6415 W. Mt. Vernon)
  - Shining Star Christian School-Fairview (137 N 66<sup>th</sup>)
  - Woodland Elementary (5510 W. Bluemound)
  - Hawley Environmental School (5610 W. Wisconsin Ave)
  - Jefferson Elementary (6927 Maple Terrace)
  - MATC-West Allis (1200 S. 71<sup>st</sup>)
  - Pius High School (135 N 76<sup>th</sup>)
  - St. Vincent Pallotti High School (201 N 76<sup>th</sup>)
  - Horace Mann Elementary (6213 W. Lapham St.)

A limited broadcast would not have reached members of the public who work, go to school and otherwise travel to or through that particular area.

### **NEXT STEPS**

OEM contacted the Wisconsin EM coordinator to run a review of the system to troubleshoot geo-fencing features.

OEM staff reviewed protocols for IPAWS alerts and counseled members regarding error (2nd alert).

Additional training requested for relevant personnel to ensure proficiency with system.

Implemented new protocol to conduct system review after every IPAWS utilization to assess opportunities for improvements.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

With the exception of AMBER Alerts, OEM has only used IPAWS once a year on average.

These messages are intended to share timely, potentially life-saving information to ensure public safety.

OEM advises the public to not deactivate this feature on their mobile devices.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This report is an Informational Report at the request of the Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning Committee Chair Supervisor Martin and Committee Vice Chair Supervisor Rolland. No recommended Board action at this time.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

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