

To Whom It May Concern,

I have prepared a brief statement in regards to the 15-91 Proceeding concerning Wireless Emergency Alerts. I will do my best to be brief.

In comment to the proposed changes of the character count from 90 to 360, I am in full agreement and support. We currently utilize a system for paging/ text alerting responders for each and every emergency call for their organization. In these page/ text alerts, we utilize a minimum of 160 characters. We have found that even utilizing a larger number of characters than that permitted by WEA, we can only advise of limited information for each call. Therefore, if the WEA messages had the capabilities of permitting 360 characters, this would not only be more user friendly for the PSAPs, but also allow the deliverance of more information to the end user and community.

In reference to the creation of new classes for the WEA Alerts, again I must state my support for this. Too many occasions have arose where the majority of the local community was not aware of conditions such as boil water advisories, land line telephone outages, etc... By implementing a wider range of classes and categories we not only expand our capabilities of informing the public about more events, but also take a large step towards utilizing the entire system for it's intended use and that is to keep the residents and community safe and aware of potential situations. I also do not feel that these categories should remain "Imminent Threats" or weather messages only. We face many other situations that WEA could potentially be used for very effectively.

To comment on the introduction of multimedia capabilities into this system, again, I stand in support. Our technological world is ever changing and advancements in it have made a magnitude of possibilities available at just the click of a mouse. As 911 Centers, we are faced with the forward progression of texting 911, and the future introduction of multimedia functions. We cannot, and should not, remain using antiquated messaging systems, but make every effort to push into the next generations of communications.

I will now comment on the introduction of State and Local testing. Just like in any FEMA or PEMA designated response plan, we MUST utilize testing to the fullest extents. The likelihood of a failure is always imminent and by a solid testing platform, these issues and occasions of failure can be limited, or corrected during a period where no "real" emergency exists. As many have heard, "if it can happen, it WILL happen at the most inopportune time!" Testing on a regular and uniform basis is one way to prevent failures during critical times.

To comment on the ability for residents/ individuals to have the ability to "opt-out", I personally feel this is not a good idea or proposal. I am sure we have all experienced a "wrong number" call or text. If we had the option to opt-out I'm sure most of us would, however, we are not speaking in terms of malicious or unwanted messages, but instead we are discussing the events of public safety and concern. I feel all mobile devices should receive the messages and not have an opt-out option. If a test message is received and the user decides to opt-out then 1 hour later a true emergency occurs life and property loss may occur due to not receiving the alert. I guess my opinion is this, I don't have the ability to opt-out of the National Broadcast System tests (that always seem to happen during your favorite television program), so why should mobile users be able to opt-out for the same kind of related messages. By allowing an opt-out option it increases the risk of individuals not receiving the "true alerts".

In closing, I realize I have not commented on each and every proposed implementation or idea, but I do stand in support of them. We all, as Emergency Officials, have taken it upon ourselves to do everything in our capabilities to keep our communities safe. We have the understanding that not every day will be a disaster, but by our actions and preparations, we strive to be on the forefront, leading the way if it happens. We must be diligent in our actions, and stay not only versed in the current procedures and plans, but also look forward and keep pace with the new technologies and advancements that develop. The proposed ideas and actions within this document show that advancement and the strong movement for better services to our residents and their families.

Thank You for your time and permission to enter these comments on behalf of Clarion County Office of Emergency Services. I look forward to the implementation of the WEA proposals.