

## **WEA Messaging Changes – Comments on behalf of Kansas City, MO Emergency Management**

### **Increasing message length to 360 characters: YES PLEASE**

1. The public expects more detail about the nature of the alert and geography. Even though the alerts theoretically only reach those in the danger area, we need to be able to say what, where, and how long. Simply “Tune to local radio” isn’t cutting it.
2. I fail to see how too much info is going to hurt anyone. If they can’t receive or understand it all, they can get enough to tune to local media for details.
3. Not sure about quantifying it, but time and again residents have reporting knowing there were alerts out, but not thinking they applied to them.
4. I think the optimal number might be a technical issue. How many characters on a single screen of a typical smart phone? That’s the optimal number.
5. I have a single method of alerting. I won’t maintain two just to accommodate the message length, nor will I issue two alerts. It’s an emergency. Time is lives.

### **WEA Category “Emergency Government Information” for non-emergency messages: NO NO NO NO**

No further discussion. This is a HORRIBLE IDEA. WEA may be the most important notification system since smoke signals. It is at risk of being ruined by overuse for “Winter storms” and “Flash floods” that lead to thousands of people turning them off completely. I realize agencies want to rid themselves of multiple notification systems, but with the social media available now, I think non-emergency messages can get out in other ways.

### **Allowing URLs and phone numbers in WEA messages: URLs yes. Not phone numbers.**

1. URLs would advance public safety. The majority of phones now have internet access. A great way to point the public to the source, such as the NWS alert. Phone numbers NO – The phones would be overwhelmed and add to the confusion. A URL can provide all the information needed as well as a phone number if absolutely required.
2. Yes, the public turns to the Internet as their first source of additional information or to authenticate what they get on the phone. Few people understand what the alert is or means.
3. URLs would improve quality of info. Phone numbers would just add to the confusion. Virtually any phone system will be overwhelmed if people start calling it in response to an alert.
4. URLs yes. Phone numbers make it worse.
5. People know to call 911 with amber alerts or allow the use of 911 only. If it’s not a 911 call, it doesn’t belong in a WEA.
6. Absolutely URLs would help the disabled. Again, phone numbers will make it worse.
7. I think the use of images would create issues. Just use a URL and they can get info there. Some phones won’t get images. People would have blanks. Keep It Simple

**Multilingual Messages:** I'm sorry for the non-English speakers, but we can only send messages in English. If we rely on automated translations, the message could be delivered incorrectly. AND would it mean English speakers getting messages in another language? Talk about ignoring and shutting them off. Non English speakers with their phones set to another language should get an EMERGENCY in their own language and no enough to follow the URL or seek more info.

**Improved WEA geo-targeting:** The more geographically precise, the better. I am concerned about our software's ability to adapt. I don't want to have to buy new software, but do what we have to.

**Inclusion of local WEA test codes:** YES YES YES

1. Any test code has to be optional. Again, if they can't opt out they will shut them off altogether. It is one thing to be disturbed in a meeting, funeral, wedding or other event for an emergency. An entirely different thing for a test.
2. I don't believe we should allow a delay. Again, more confusion. If we announce that we are conducting a test and they don't get it or get it hours/days later people will lose faith in the system and shut it off and/or call us and ask. The public needs to be able to opt out of tests. I would prefer they be able to opt out of A SINGLE TEST, not all.
3. They shouldn't be allowed more once a month. I'd be ok with twice a year. I'd like to require a 24 hr advance notice of an upcoming test to allow users to silence their phones for that day.
4. Confidence in the system and a better understanding of its use. Currently, we have two separate systems, a test system and a live system. We have no way of knowing if our own live system works. The public often gets these alerts and they disappear before they know what they are or they don't know if their phones get messages. It would be great to be able to announce a WEA test to coincide with the statewide tornado drill or other drill.

**Require cell carriers to log alerts** – This could be good information to have, but I'm hesitant to require it.