



THE NAVAJO NATION

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NAVAJO NATION RELATIONSHIP WITH NEW MEXICO ENSURES AMBER ALERTS ARE ISSUED

WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ-While the Navajo Nation Alert System Task Force (NNASTF) is in the process of developing and implementing its own emergency alert system, the task force has developed relationships with the states of Utah, Arizona and New Mexico to ensure AMBER Alerts are issued during the interim.

The State of New Mexico has volunteered to be the clearinghouse for AMBER Alerts on the Navajo Nation. This means the State of New Mexico would notify both Arizona and Utah in the instance that the Navajo Nation issues an AMBER Alert. Thus, issuance of the alert would be coordinated within the three states.

Initially, the NNASTF was established in May 2016 with no funds immediately allocated to the task force. However, the NNASTF has moved forward in coordinating with surrounding state's Department of Public Safety personnel in specifically addressing the development of a Navajo Nation Amber Alert System.

"We, the OPVP and the Navajo Nation, realize that there won't be a 'one-size fits all' solution when it comes to technologically addressing the alert system. It will take a combination of other technologies, programs and departments, both tribally and federally, to provide for the protection and safety of Navajo Nation employees as well as the general public," said President Russell Begaye.

The NNASTF has also worked with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NSME&C) to conduct training for law enforcement and dispatchers. Navajo Nation Telecommunication Regulatory Commission is working with NSME&C to identify Navajos to become certified trainers.

The task force has also developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Navajo Nation that will authorize the Nation to utilize IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert & Warning System). The MOA is currently at the Department of Justice.

Federal, state, tribal, and local alerting authorities use IPAWS to integrate local systems that use Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) standards with the IPAWS infrastructure.

IPAWS provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface.

Designing a 911 service system is complex and requires reliable infrastructure and a long-term funding commitment for sustainability. A major part of the design is the inventory of existing infrastructure. What exists on the Navajo Nation? How can existing resources be used to leverage deployment?

There are potentially multiple telecommunications carriers both wired and wireless that will need to be involved in providing 911 services. The NNASTF realizes that there are locations in which traditional commercial carriers will not build. These are the areas in which the Navajo Nation will have to make the investment.

To properly plan and implement a 911 system for the Navajo Nation, the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission will need to partner with the multiple divisions and entities like: the Division of Public Safety, Navajo Rural Addressing, Department of Information Technology, Navajo Telecommunications & Utilities, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Navajo Housing Authority, Navajo Division of Transportation, Navajo Rangers, Fish & Wildlife, Forestry, commercial carriers both wired and wireless, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service.

By directive the NNASTF was requested to submit a budget to be presented to the standing committees. The additional funding request is for upwards of \$3.8 million dollars and is sponsored by Delegate Kee Allen Begay with support from Delegate Amber Crotty.

In the FY 2017 Navajo Nation Comprehensive Budget, \$288,000 was allocated to the Navajo Telecommunication Regulatory Commission for the purposes of identifying wireless carrier towers to assist the cause of developing both a 911 and emergency alert system.

“The reality of a 911 and an emergency alert system is that it will only happen if there is a substantive investment and long-term commitment by the Navajo Nation,” President Begaye said.

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