



Homeland Security Missouri Alert Network

Overview: The Homeland Security Missouri Alert Network (Alert Network) builds and expands on an existing alert network previously developed to provide emergency messaging capabilities by the Department of Public Safety/Office of Homeland Security for school officials. The original alert network was provided at no cost to the state or to the participants, through a cooperative agreement between the Missouri School Boards' Association and DPS. The original system facilitated emergency messaging to all schools that chose to participate, both public and private, at the K-12 and higher education level. The network is activated on the authority of the Director of Public Safety, and managed jointly by the Office of Homeland Security and the Missouri Information Analysis Center.

The expanded Alert Network is providing Missouri public safety officials with immediate phone, email and text message broadcast capabilities to the key individuals within each participating stakeholder community. Utilizing this network, public safety, health, and other officials will be able to instantly message up to 5,000 elected and appointed leaders in individual first responder and other stakeholder communities such as police, sheriff's, fire departments, county and city government, emergency medical services (EMS), 9-1-1 Centers, and even key private sector stakeholders. The system can send a message to just one discipline or community of stakeholders, or to everyone. A message can be sent to a selected geographic area, or the whole state.

In the past, the network has been used to message school officials about changing H1N1 Flu guidelines for closing schools, as well as alert K-12 schools when there was suspicious activity observed, relating to a school bus dropping off children in a rural area. The alert network is not intended to support routine or regularly occurring communications between public safety and other state agencies; however, there is a monthly routine test of the system to insure that the system will work in a real emergency. It is also noted that the intent of this system is not to provide emergency messages to the public in general, but rather provide elected and appointed leadership at all levels of timely emergency information so that they can make informed decisions and act on emerging situations.

In July 2009, with the potential need for public safety messaging of appropriate officials at all levels in light of the H1N1 flu situation, the Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council voted to allow the Office of Homeland Security to expand the Alert Network and fund the expansion with existing homeland security grant funds. Individual stakeholder communities are being asked to develop and maintain the contact databases for the network, in order to be able to sustain this effort with a minimal investment of the scarce homeland security grant funds that the state receives.

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