IMPROVEMENTS TO HOUSTON’S EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

CITY OF HOUSTON | CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2017
Emergency Warning in Houston

• OEM is charged by Chapter 13 of the Code of Ordinances with “establish[ing] a method to conduct city-wide warnings or other public announcements and disseminate emergency public information during a disaster”

• Annex A – Warning was revised in 2016 in coordination with the Houston Police Department.
## Current Capabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AlertHouston</th>
<th>GHC 911 ENS</th>
<th>IPAWS</th>
<th>Fixed Assets (Emergency vehicles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Email Notifications</td>
<td>• Voice calls to landlines</td>
<td>• Activate WEA Messages</td>
<td>• Use HPD/HFD Vehicles</td>
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<td>• Social Media Integration</td>
<td>• Opt-in for digital/mobile</td>
<td>• Activate Emergency Alert System (EAS)</td>
<td>• Targets specific areas</td>
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<td>• Post to website</td>
<td>• Opt-in for SMS</td>
<td>• Integrated with NOAA WX Radio</td>
<td>• Draws down available staffing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Limited Geographic range</td>
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<td>resources</td>
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Current Limitations - AlertHouston

• AlertHouston currently only supports Email, no voice, SMS, etc.
• The current AlertHouston vendor suspended operations. OEM working with an interim vendor until the upgrade is complete.
• AlertHouston requires manual translation, no option for multi-language alerts.
• Multiple systems requires a multi-step process
Expected Improvements - AlertHouston

• New vendor will provide:
  – SMS Messaging
  – Branded Mobile App
  – Social Media Integration
  – IPAWS Integration (WEA/EAS/NOAA)
  – Multi-Language Opt-in
  – Unified portal for alert origination

• Integrate with SAP to import City Employee data
  – Can be used by departments as part of Continuity of Operations
Emergency Alert Pathway
(Before)
Emergency Alert Pathway

(After)

OEM

New System

EAS/HC

Nextdoor

HEC 911

GHC 911 ENS

Email

Twitter/Facebook

WEA

SMS Text

Branded Mobile App

EAS (TV/ Radio)

Voice Phone
## AlertHouston Project Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
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<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
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### November 2016
- Departmental Needs Assessment

### January 13, 2017
- RFP Issued by SPD

### March 31, 2017
- Finalist Selection

### March 29, 2017
- Oral Presentations by Vendors

### April 25, 2017
- Top Finalist Presentation

### May 11- June 1, 2017
- Contract Negotiation

### August / September 2017
- Public Roll-Out

### August 2017
- Contract Start
Looking Forward

• Implementation of AlertHouston enhancements
• Conducting additional training with first response agencies on Warning systems
• Public awareness campaign to promote alert registration
WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS
Current Limitations - WEA

• Limited to 90 Characters
• Cannot include dynamic media (photos, video, etc.)
• Cannot be in a language other than English
• Cannot include links
• Cannot include phone numbers
• Granularity of geo-targeting is limited
Recent FCC Updates to WEA

- Enlarge Character Count to 360
- Allow for Phone Numbers
- Allow for URLs
- Add “public safety messages” that don’t meet the “imminent threat” threshold
- Thumbnail-size images*
- Broadcast messages in English and Spanish
- Directs providers to improve geo-targeting by allowing phones to use GPS to filter messages.
DENNIS J. STOREMSKI
DIRECTOR
CITY OF HOUSTON | MAYOR’S OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY
Dennis.Storemski@houstontx.gov

MICHAEL M. WALTER
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
CITY OF HOUSTON | OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
Michael.Walter@houstontx.gov