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Public Information Statement 21-69
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From: Douglas C. Young
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Subject: Soliciting Comments on a Proposal to Nationally Expand Partial
County Alerting via NWR and EAS for Select Counties through March 1, 2022

NWS is seeking comments through March 1, 2022 on a proposal to nationally expand Partial County Alerting (PCA) via NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) and the Emergency Alert System (EAS) for select counties.

A comprehensive description of this proposal to implement PCA for select counties on a national basis is online at:

<http://www.weather.gov/pca/expansion>

For this Public Information Statement, use of the word county includes parishes, independent cities, boroughs, census areas and other county equivalents as designated by the Bureau of the Census.

NWS generally disseminates weather warnings via NWR and EAS for an entire county. Current exceptions to whole-county alerting are several counties where PCA was implemented in the early 2000s and most recently for Clark County, Nevada on June 1, 2021.

Since 2007, many short-fused NWS warnings providing alerts over NWR and EAS have been refined to an areal extent using forecaster-defined polygons. At the same time, NWS has not leveraged the full capability to disseminate these warnings via NWR and EAS for fixed, areal sections of counties, referred to as county partitions by the NWS and as subdivisions by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The goal of PCA is to reduce the geographical overalerting of warnings via NWR and EAS dissemination by more closely associating NWS polygon-defined warnings with fixed county partitions. Once implemented, NWR users with Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME)-equipped receivers can individually choose the partition(s) of a county for which they will receive automated alerts. Similarly, PCA allows broadcasters to choose the partition(s) of a county for which they will convey NWS warnings through the EAS. Once established in operations, the boundaries of the county partitions are fixed.

A PCA Fact Sheet is online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/media/pca/PCA-factsheet3-21.pdf>

Note that NWR users and broadcasters may choose to not transition to PCA and will continue to receive all of the county warnings.

NWS is proposing the expansion of PCA to other counties and moving the capability into the national software baseline for areas that may benefit from this change. PCA can improve warning dissemination for geographically large counties and counties with unique shapes (e.g., latitudinally or longitudinally elongated) or configurations (e.g., islands).

For the broadcaster community: Current 47 Code of Regulations (CFR) Part 11 Rules (Section 11.31, EAS Protocol) allow for the dissemination of messages to the EAS using county subdivisions, when defined and agreed to by local officials.

For the NWR user community: Most NWR receivers with SAME capability provide the ability to use county partitions. A description of SAME location codes where the first digit is non-zero is provided at:

<https://www.weather.gov/nwr/sameenz>

The proposed implementation of PCA for select counties on a national basis would be accompanied by the following dissemination improvements:

- 1) A Partition Tag Line will be added to World Meteorological Organization (WMO) text warning products.
- 2) Common Alerting Protocol version 1.2 (CAP v1.2) messages will contain each PCA SAME code in the <area> block with a <geocode> valueName of "SAME".
- 3) Many messages created by local alerting authorities and sent to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) may be disseminated via NWR using PCA.
- 4) Consistent service delivery for NWR will be provided by implementing PCA on each NWR transmitter broadcasting warnings via SAME to a partitioned county.

A Service Description Document on PCA is provided at:

https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/SDD_PartialCountyAlerting_ProposedNationalExpansion_2021-2022.pdf

Please send any comments or questions on the national NWS PCA initiative to:

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National Public Information Statements are online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/notification>

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