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**INFORMATION MEMORANDUM** [See Attachments]

**TO:** Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

**SUBJECT:** Distribution of Public Alert Radios to Head Start Programs

**INFORMATION:**

Through a partnership between the Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Homeland Security and the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, Head Start programs across the country will receive free Public Alert Radios over the next several weeks. These radios will be sent to each center and will provide alerts and safety steps about a variety of emergencies due to weather, telephone outages disrupting 9-1-1 emergency services, hazardous materials threats, or missing children.

Attached to this Information Memorandum is more detailed information about the program, including a list of Frequently Asked Questions and a list of resources.

I encourage you to reach out to your community partners to work together to develop and coordinate emergency preparedness efforts.

For more information about emergency preparedness, please visit the Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>.

Thank you for your work on this important topic.

/Patricia E. Brown/

Patricia E. Brown  
 Acting Director  
 Office of Head Start

## **ATTACHMENT: NOAA School Radio Program**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is a NOAA Public Alert Radio?**

Also known as the NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards, NOAA's Public Alert Radio is a life-saving early warning tool that notifies radio users of all hazards in their area 24 hours a day/seven days a week, even when other means of communication are disabled. The radio will signal an audible alert with a visible indicator light as a "watch" or "warning" and a brief digital text message to advise on a wide range of emergency situations and post-event information for all types of hazards including natural (e.g. earthquakes or avalanches); environmental (e.g. chemical releases or oil spills); and public safety (e.g. AMBER alerts or 911 telephone outages).

#### **Distribution of NOAA Public Alert Radios**

##### **Which schools are receiving NOAA Public Alert Radios in 2008?**

This year, NOAA is distributing public alert radios to about 183,000 schools in the U.S. and its territories including:

- Preschools and Head Start programs (public and nonpublic)
- K-12 nonpublic schools
- K-12 public school district offices and K-12 nonpublic school central offices
- Postsecondary schools (public and nonpublic 2 and 4 year schools)

##### **Do schools need to request the Public Alert Radios?**

No. Radios will be sent directly from NOAA via FedEx to each preschool, K-12 public school district office, K-12 nonpublic school central office, K -12 nonpublic schools, and each postsecondary school.

##### **When will my school receive its radio?**

Most schools will receive their radios in either August or September. Radio distribution is already underway, and NOAA personnel will continue to work until each school receives a radio.

##### **How do I request a radio if my school does not receive one by the end of September 2008?**

For more information, go to the Web site (<http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/proginfo.htm>), find your jurisdiction and determine if your school is listed or not. Schools with post office box addresses will need a street address in order to receive the radios. There is a form on the Web site in this section that also will allow schools to indicate that they have not received the radio. For any additional assistance, please contact: The NWR School Radio Administrator at [NWR.School.Radio@noaa.gov](mailto:NWR.School.Radio@noaa.gov) or 301-713-9480 , extension 118.

##### **Does my school have to pay for its radio?**

No. NOAA Public Alert Radios will be provided at no cost through the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency for use in every preschool, K-12 nonpublic school, K-12 public school district office, K-12 nonpublic school central office, and postsecondary school in the United States.

##### **How will the radios be distributed?**

Radios will be distributed to schools accompanied by a letter and brochure explaining the program's purpose and the intended use of the radio. Schools accepting the radios will be instructed to register

online at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/register/> to confirm that they have received and accepted the radios, and to agree that the radios will be used to receive “all hazards” public alerts and warnings. Public schools, as governmental entities, will be given the radios, while nonpublic schools, as nongovernmental entities, will have use of the radios under a licensing agreement and ownership will remain vested in the U.S. government.

### **Are NOAA Public Alert Radios being sent to schools in states that already mandate that schools have radios?**

Yes. To ensure that they have the most up-to-date equipment, the distribution also includes schools in the six states that currently mandate schools to have radios, which are Washington, Tennessee, North Carolina, Maryland, Florida and Mississippi.

### **If a school already has a radio, what should the school do with the pre-existing radio?**

Schools should always check with the organization that provided the pre-existing radio to decide the best way to handle it. Possible ways to address pre-existing radios are to leave it in the school or to redistribute it to another critical location in the area, such as an assisted living facility or other location. Entities that previously provided schools with a radio and want more information on redistributing a radio previously purchased with DHS Homeland Security Grant Program money can call the Department’s Office of Grant Operations at 1-866- 9ASK-OGO ( 866-927-5646 ) or e-mail [ASK-OGO@DHS.GOV](mailto:ASK-OGO@DHS.GOV).

## **Registration of Radios**

### **Why do I have to register my radio?**

Registration is required to ensure that each school acknowledges receipt or placement of the radio and provides a contact to receive any further information regarding the radio or the program.

## **License Agreement for Nonpublic Schools**

### **Who is required to have a license agreement?**

Nonpublic schools that accept placement of NOAA radios are required to complete and submit a license agreement on the Web site. After the license agreement is completed and submitted, the school should print a copy from the Web site and retain the copy for their records.

### **What does the license agreement do?**

The license agreement allows nonpublic schools to accept placement of the NOAA radios, while ownership remains vested in the U.S. government. Any nonpublic school that accepts a radio placement must submit a license agreement on the Web site. Placement of the radio in a nonpublic school under the license agreement does not make the nonpublic school a recipient of federal financial assistance.

### **When must the license agreement be submitted?**

A nonpublic school official must visit the Web site registration and licensing link as soon as the radio is received to accept or decline the radio and to submit a license agreement when it accepts placement of the radio.

### **How can my school opt-out of the program if it does not wish to participate?**

Participation is voluntary. A school that does not wish to participate may opt-out by following the

instructions on the NOAA registration page at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/register/>. Arrangements will be made for the radio to be retrieved at no cost to the school.

## How NOAA Public Alert Radios Work

### How does the radio signal an emergency?

The radio will signal an audible alert with a visible indicator light as a “watch” or “warning” and a brief text message. In addition, Public Alert Radios can be connected to attention-getting devices, such as strobe lights, sirens, and peripheral alerting mechanisms to ensure that people with particular challenges can also benefit from the safeguards.

### Who issues the emergency warnings?

Weather-related warnings and other information broadcast over NOAA Public Alert Radio are issued by the local forecast office of NOAA's National Weather Service that is responsible for your area. Civil emergency alerts are issued by local, state or federal emergency officials and are disseminated by NOAA's National Weather Service on their behalf via NOAA Public Alert Radio.

### What events does the radio recognize?

These Public Alert Radios have the ability to recognize the following messages:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 911 Telephone Outage Emergency</li><li>• Avalanche Warning</li><li>• Avalanche Watch</li><li>• Blizzard Warning</li><li>• Child Abduction Emergency</li><li>• Civil Danger Warning</li><li>• Civil Emergency Message</li><li>• Coastal Flood Warning</li><li>• Coastal Flood Watch</li><li>• Dust Storm Warning</li><li>• Earthquake Warning</li><li>• Emergency Action Notification</li><li>• Emergency Action Termination</li><li>• Fire Warning</li><li>• Flash Flood Watch</li><li>• Flash Flood Statement</li><li>• Flash Flood Warning</li><li>• Flood Statement</li><li>• Flood Warning</li><li>• Flood Watch</li><li>• Freeze Warning</li><li>• Hazardous Materials Warning</li><li>• Hurricane Statement</li><li>• Hurricane Warning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hurricane Watch</li><li>• High Wind Warning</li><li>• High Wind Watch</li><li>• Evacuation Immediate</li><li>• Law Enforcement Warning</li><li>• Local Area Emergency</li><li>• Nuclear Power Plant Warning</li><li>• Radiological Hazard Warning</li><li>• Shelter In-Place Warning</li><li>• Special Marine Warning</li><li>• Special Weather Statement</li><li>• Severe Thunderstorm Warning</li><li>• Severe Thunderstorm Watch</li><li>• Severe Weather Statement</li><li>• Tornado Warning</li><li>• Tornado Watch</li><li>• Tropical Storm Warning</li><li>• Tropical Storm Watch</li><li>• Tsunami Warning</li><li>• Tsunami Watch</li><li>• Volcano Warning</li><li>• Winter Storm Warning</li><li>• Winter Storm Watch</li></ul>
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### Is there anything different about the NOAA Public Alert Radios currently being distributed?

The NOAA Public Alert Radios distributed in 2005, 2006, and 2008 incorporate the latest technology and standards for advance notification of all types of hazards—not just weather alerts. Furthermore, the latest radios are programmable to specific regions and allow users to hear alerts pertinent for their locality.

## **Resources for Assistance**

### **How do I set up and program the radio?**

The Web site provides several guides to assist with setting up the radio. The manufacturer's instructions are available at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/instructions.htm>. The Citizen Corps Volunteer Material Web link at [http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/cc\\_volunteer\\_material.htm](http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/cc_volunteer_material.htm) includes a checklist in the "Citizen Corps Volunteer Guide" and "Easy Start Guides for Schools" for each brand of radio.

### **How can I get in-person assistance with the radio?**

Assistance with the radios may be provided by your local emergency manager, your local Citizen Corps Council and programs, NOAA warning coordination meteorologists and local ham radio clubs. There are over 2,300 local Citizen Corps Councils around the country that can help coordinate technical assistance to your school. Local contact information for these councils is available at [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov). To find a local chapter of your local American of Radio Relay League (ARRL), whose club members have experience in programming and registering the NOAA radios, visit <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/club/clubsearch.phtml>.

### **Who will pay for maintenance, such as new batteries?**

The NOAA Public Alert Radio is provided to schools free of charge to help protect our nation's education institutions by providing early warnings of local hazards. Once the radio is delivered, users are responsible for ongoing maintenance, such as changing the batteries.

### **What if the NOAA Public Alert Radio is not receiving a signal or if there are other technical difficulties?**

If you are unable to establish reception for NOAA Public Alert Radios in your area or have other technical issues, a NOAA warning coordination meteorologist (WCM) for your area will assist you. You may locate your local WCM at <http://www.weather.gov/os/wcm-soo.pdf>.

### **What if the radio my school receives is broken or defective?**

For more information, please contact the NWR School Radio Administrator at [NWR.School.Radio@noaa.gov](mailto:NWR.School.Radio@noaa.gov) or 301-713-9480 , extension 118.

### **Are Citizen Corps Councils required to help schools program and test the NOAA Public Alert Radios?**

Participation on the part of Citizen Corps Councils is entirely voluntary. To the extent that Councils assist schools, these efforts should be coordinated through the local emergency management agency.

### **If a Citizen Corps Council or program chooses to volunteer to assist in this project, where should it begin?**

If a Citizen Corps Council or program chooses to volunteer assistance to local schools, then the Council should first communicate with the schools to determine if assistance is needed. Then, the Council should contact local emergency managers and, together, plan a coordinated approach for contacting school leadership to verify that the radios have been received and to offer assistance with registration and set-up. Individual Citizen Corps volunteers should work under the direction of their Citizen Corps leadership. In August 2008, all Citizen Corps Councils received a letter notifying them that the radios were being distributed. The letter also informed the Councils of their potential role. A copy of the letter is available online at the following address: [http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/cc\\_volunteer\\_material.htm](http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/cc_volunteer_material.htm). This page also includes a link to information for

Citizen Corps volunteers including a volunteer guide, quick start guide and manufacturers' user's manuals.

**How soon should Citizen Corps leaders contact their local schools to assist with the NOAA Public Alert Radio Program?**

If assistance is needed, Citizen Corps leaders should take time to plan with schools officials and emergency managers and coordinate their approach to offering assistance. This program is an opportunity to work with schools on their preparedness and alert plans and to promote communication between emergency management agencies and schools on emergency management plans. It is also an opportunity to connect Citizen Corps Councils to local education leaders so that schools are integrated into local emergency management planning efforts.

**Whom should I contact if I still have questions about the NOAA Public Alert Radio?**

For more information, please contact your warning coordination meteorologist through the National Weather Service's closest Weather Forecast Office. These contacts are available at <http://www.weather.gov/os/wcm-soo.pdf>. You may also visit NOAA's program Web site at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/proginfo.htm>.

## **ATTACHMENT: Resources for School Radio Program**

### **Emergency Management**

Contacting state and local emergency management is a critical step to preparing schools for disasters. Emergency management offices create and implement state and local emergency operations plans (EOP). At the state level, education leaders should contact their state emergency management office to coordinate disaster preparedness efforts. At the local level, schools are encouraged to contact local emergency management officials and align school disaster plans with their community emergency operation plan to better protect staff and students.

- To locate offices and agencies of state emergency management, log onto: <http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm>.
- To get contact information for local emergency management offices, you can e-mail or call the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) at [info@iaem](mailto:info@iaem) or 703-538-1795, extension 2, to ask for your local contact, or visit the link for the state Web sites at <http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm>.

### **Citizen Corps**

Citizen Corps is the Federal Emergency Management Agency's community-based program to promote citizen preparedness and participation. Citizen Corps can be a resource for disaster preparedness education and training opportunities, as well as a bridge to working with emergency management, law enforcement, fire services and local health professionals. At the state level, education leaders are encouraged to contact their state Citizen Corps Council and coordinate disaster preparedness education and outreach to schools. At the local level, schools are encouraged to contact their local Citizen Corps Council for training opportunities and ways to become involved.

- To locate your State Citizen Corps Council visit: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cc/listCouncil.do?submitByState&stateOnly>.
- To locate your local Citizen Corps Council visit: [http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/find\\_council.shtm](http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/find_council.shtm).

### **NOAA Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM)**

Warning Coordination Meteorologists are willing to meet with you, your teams and school administrators to provide training and technical assistance on radio operation and to provide programs to educate students, teachers and the community on weather. For special school presentations, schools are encouraged to contact their local Warning Coordination Meteorologist.

- For information on contacting your local Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) log onto: <http://www.weather.gov/os/wcm-soo.pdf>.

### **American Radio Relay League (ARRL) and Local Ham Radio Clubs**

The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) has approximately 152,000 members and is the largest organization of radio amateurs in the United States. The ARRL is a not-for-profit organization that promotes interest in Amateur Radio communications and experimentation, represents US radio amateurs in legislative matters and maintains fraternalism and a high standard of conduct among

Amateur Radio operators. ARRL members have volunteered to partner with schools to program and register their NOAA Public Alert Radio. Schools should contact an ARRL representative for assistance.

- To locate your ARRL state sections, visit <http://www.arrl.org/sections/>,
- To find contacts for local clubs, use the ARRL club locator at <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/club/clubsearch.phtml>.

## **Resources for Emergency Management and Citizen Corps Councils**

### **Preschools and Head Start Programs**

Preschools provide educational programs that suit young children aged three to five and provide them a foundation before they enter kindergarten. One such program, Head Start, is a federally funded program that provides grants to local public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies to deliver comprehensive child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families, with a special focus on helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. Preschools should have emergency plans in effect to ensure the safety of children and faculty. Local emergency managers and Citizen Corps Councils are encouraged to work with preschools in their communities to develop and implement these plans.

- To locate preschools in your community, visit the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center's Web site with links to each state's child care division page(s). Each state should have a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency or something similar that can refer a person to early childhood programs in their area. <http://www.nccic.org/statedata/dirs/statehp.html>.
- To locate Head Start facilities, please visit: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/hsweb/index.jsp>.
- To view a list of the names and addresses of preschools and Head Start programs scheduled to receive the NOAA Alert Radios in your community, go to the Web site at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>; select the registration link for either public or nonpublic preschools; and enter your state and county to get a list of the preschools in your jurisdiction scheduled to receive the radios.

### **K-12 Public Schools and District Offices**

School district offices have emergency management plans and communication procedures for the public schools within their district. To offer assistance with NOAA Public Alert Radios and schools emergency management plans, local emergency management agencies and Citizen Corps Councils are encouraged to contact their local school district office to coordinate communication with individual public schools in their area. Contacts should not be made directly to individual schools.

- State education contacts and information are located on the Department of Education Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html>.
- Local public school district offices contacts and information can be located at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>.
- If you would like to view a list of the names and addresses of district offices scheduled to receive the NOAA Alert Radios in your community, go to the Web site at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>; select the registration link for school district offices, and enter your state and county.

### **K-12 Nonpublic School Central Offices and Schools**

Nonpublic schools often have emergency management plans and communication procedures in place



that are aligned with the plan of the local community in which the schools are located. To offer assistance with NOAA Public Alert Radios and schools' emergency management plans, local emergency management agencies and Citizen Corps Councils are encouraged to contact the nonpublic schools within their geographical area to coordinate communication and develop a coordinated plan that meets the community's needs.

- Contact information for most, though not all nonpublic schools, may be found via the Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/>.
- Many private school organizations maintain lists of their member schools on their Web sites. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Nonpublic Education maintains a list of private school organizations at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/organizations.html>.
- Many state departments of education maintain a list of nonpublic schools located in their states. Contact information for state departments of education may be found at <http://www.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html>.
- Most local public school districts maintain a list of nonpublic schools located within their geographical boundaries. Contact information for local public school district offices may be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>.
- To view a list of the names and addresses of district offices scheduled to receive the NOAA Alert Radios in your community, visit <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>; select the registration link for school district offices; and enter your state and county.

### **Postsecondary Schools**

Postsecondary schools, also known as Institutions of Higher Education, most often have emergency management plans in place. NOAA Public Alert Radios can help to inform postsecondary institutions of emergency situations that require immediate action. Emergency management and Citizens Corp Councils should contact state offices of education and/or directors of security at individual postsecondary institutions to help coordinate emergency management efforts.

State higher education agency contacts and information can be found on the Department of Education Web site at [http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org\\_list.cfm?category\\_ID=SHE](http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_ID=SHE).

To view a list of the names and addresses of postsecondary schools scheduled to receive the NOAA Alert Radios in your community, go to the Web site at <http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>; select the registration link for postsecondary schools; and enter your state and county.

### **Additional Resources**

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools  
[www.ed.gov/emergencyplan](http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan)
- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center  
<http://rems.ed.gov>
- Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention  
[www.higheredcenter.org](http://www.higheredcenter.org)