# Partners Provide Statewide Radio Alerts to Save Lives

## Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

*State-wide, Missouri*

**Jefferson City, MO** - As severe weather hits at 3 a.m. and most people are nestled sound asleep, officials at Missouri's State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) are confident that the citizens of Missouri are less vulnerable to disaster. Nearly all communities in the State now have access to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) severe weather radio alerts for notification of pending storms.

SEMA, electric cooperatives, private businesses, the National Weather Service (NWS), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) joined forces to provide the State with NOAA weather transmitters and maximize radio alert coverage of every community in Missouri.

"There have been other attempts of similar projects that failed because tower space was unavailable for the transmitters," said Allan Johnston, P.E., an engineering supervisor at Central Electric Power Cooperative, located in Jefferson City.

In 1995, the State had only 10 transmitters, with coverage primarily for densely populated areas but very little coverage for its rural communities. Having the NOAA severe weather radio provides early, life-saving warnings that notify radio users of approaching hazards to the area.

Although acquiring donations for available tower space and securing funds to purchase transmitters were key concerns but not obstacles, SEMA proceeded with a plan to extend radio alert coverage throughout the State. SEMA officials helped to successfully negotiate with various utility partners and private businesses for donated tower space to install the NOAA transmitters. Several electric cooperatives, which provide power to the State's rural communities, also agreed to facilitate purchasing and installing the transmitters and equipment before donating them to NWS. In return, NWS agreed to maintain and program the equipment and provide the communication links that activate tone alert radios when severe warnings are issued for local or adjoining communities.

"We are generally willing to work with the State and Federal agencies where possible. When SEMA came to us and showed us holes in radio alert coverage areas, we worked to close the gap, to protect the public," added Nancy Gibler, director of Business Development at Central Electric Power Cooperative.

A major portion of the estimated $1.4 million project came from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). FEMA provides 75 percent of the total grant while State and local resources contribute the remaining 25 percent. The HMGP program is designed to reduce the loss of life and property, lessen the impact to local communities due to natural disasters, and enable recovery following disasters. SEMA, the grantee, administered the grants, and the local electric cooperatives managed the funds.

SEMA also secured funds from Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG), a program of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. EMPG has 50 percent, non-Federal cost-share match requirement. States can utilize these funds to strengthen their ability to support emergency management activities while addressing issues of National concern.

Other electric cooperatives, as well as National emergency organizations and local businesses, also contributed funds to help purchase equipment.

Between 2000 and 2005, 23 additional transmitters were installed throughout Missouri. With a total of 33 transmitter sites Missouri now has nearly 100 percent radio alert coverage.

The partners – private sector, government, and electric cooperatives – are still sounding the alert. Only this time it is about getting tone alert radios in the hands of every citizen in every community to help save lives. In addition to commercial media promotions on the importance of owning the radios, electric cooperatives and local businesses have purchased thousands of radios and distributed them at no cost to schools, churches, hospitals, senior centers, and others.

For all the initiative, hard work and commitment, SEMA received NOAA's Mark Trail Award, an award given to individuals and organizations for supporting NOAA's Weather Radio Outreach.

"Tone alert radios are pretty handy and fairly inexpensive. The alarm can be life saving," Johnston explained. "When local TV stations and radio stations lose power, that little radio will still come on. It's well worth the cost. It's a very good warning system."

## Activity/Project Location

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|---|---|
| Geographical Area: | **State-wide** |
| FEMA Region: | **Region VII** |
| State: | **Missouri** |

## Key Activity/Project Information

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|---|---|
| Sector: | **Public/Private Partnership** |
| Hazard Type: | **Winter Storm; Severe Storm; Tornado; Flooding** |
| Activity/Project Type: | **Warning Systems** |
| Activity/Project Start Date: | **01/1995** |
| Activity/Project End Date: | **12/2005** |
| Funding Source: | **Business Owner; Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Non-profit organization (NPO); Private funds** |
| Application/Project Number: | **unknown** |

## Activity/Project Economic Analysis

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|---|---|
| Cost: | **Amount Not Available** |
| Non FEMA Cost: | **0** |

## Activity/Project Disaster Information

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|---|---|
| Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? | **Yes** |
| Federal Disaster #: | **995 , 07/09/1993** |
| Federal Disaster Year: | **1993** |
| Value Tested By Disaster? | **Unknown** |
| Repetitive Loss Property? | **Unknown** |

## Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/hmgp/index.shtm**

Reference URL 2: **http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/**

## Main Points

No Main Points were entered.

A NOAA weather radio antenna is attached to an electric cooperative tower.


NOAA Severe Weather Radios are shown at an exhibit.