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LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Communications: Incorporating National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Public Alert Radios into School Emergency Management Plans

SUMMARY

School administrators should consider incorporating National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Public Alert Radios into their emergency management plan (EMP) response protocols. This can help schools save lives and prevent injury to faculty members, staff members, and students during natural disasters and other hazards.

DESCRIPTION

On June 6, 2005, a thunderstorm with winds estimated up to 70 mph was detected by the NOAA National Weather Service forecast office in Binghamton, New York. Following the detection of the storm, the forecast office transmitted a severe thunderstorm warning over its Weather Radio All Hazards Network.

The Charles F. Johnson Elementary School in Endicott, New York, received the warning via a NOAA Public Alert Radio that it had obtained from the Union-Endicott Central school district in 2002. The warning provided the school 22 minutes to implement its severe weather safety protocols and to move students to pre-determined "storm-safe areas" within the building. When the storm struck, it ripped the roof off the kindergarten wing. The timely implementation of the severe weather protocols enabled the school to prevent injury to and loss of life of the school's 340 faculty members, staff members, and students.

School administrators should consider incorporating NOAA Public Alert Radios into their schools' EMP response protocols. NOAA Public Alert Radios can provide school administrators with additional time to implement protocols in response to natural disasters and other hazards.

Implementation

In 2006, following the success of a pilot program, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education, and the Department of Homeland Security began a joint campaign to distribute NOAA Public Alert Radios to all public schools in the United States.

The [NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Network](#) consists of more than 950 radio transmitters located throughout the United States. The NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Network provides transmission of weather watches, warnings and advisories, and non-meteorological civil emergency messages.

For additional information on obtaining, registering, and operating NOAA Public Alert Radios, please see the National Weather Service's [Public Alert Radios for Public Schools](#).

CITATION

Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism. *2006 NOAA Public Alert Radio Distribution: Frequently Asked Questions*. 27 Sep 2006.

<http://www.terrorisminfo.mipt.org/pdf/NOAA-Public-Alert-Radio-FAQ-9-27-2006.pdf>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service. *Timely NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Warning Helps Save Children at New York Elementary School*. 27 Jun 2005.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2005/jun05/noaa05-r276.html>

Links

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Public Alert Radios for Public Schools.

<http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov/>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service, NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards.

<http://www.weather.gov/nwr/>

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