

Testimony of  
Chris Guttman-McCabe  
Executive Vice President  
CTIA – The Wireless Association®

on

“FEMA Reauthorization: Ensuring the Nation Is Prepared”

before the  
House Transportation & Infrastructure  
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

October 2, 2013



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Chairman Barletta, Ranking Member Carson, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for affording CTIA<sup>1</sup> the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. My name is Chris Guttman-McCabe, and I serve as the Association's Executive Vice President. In this role, and mainly my previous role as CTIA's Vice President for Regulatory Affairs, I have been involved in the wireless industry's efforts to implement the Commercial Mobile Alert Service called for by the WARN Act, and I am pleased to update you today on the wireless industry's efforts to deliver a state-of-the-art alerting system to America's wireless consumers.

The Commercial Mobile Alert Service, which has since been renamed Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) by the Federal Communications Commission, grew out of the Warning, Alert and Response Network (or WARN) Act, which became law as Title VI of the SAFE Ports Act<sup>2</sup> in October 2006. CTIA supported enactment of the legislation, which was intended to harness the creativity of the wireless ecosystem and take advantage of the ubiquity of the mobile platform to augment the existing emergency alerting system without imposing new cost or technology mandates on the wireless industry. This approach was consistent with, and built upon, previous public-private partnerships that led to the successful creation of Wireless Priority Service (a collaborative effort between the National Communications System and the wireless industry)

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<sup>1</sup> CTIA – The Wireless Association® is a nonprofit membership organization that has represented the wireless communications industry since 1984. Membership in the association includes wireless carriers and their suppliers, as well as providers and manufacturers of wireless data services and products. Additional information about CTIA may be found at <http://www.ctia.org/aboutCTIA/>.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. 109-347.

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and the AMBER Alert program (a joint effort involving the Department of Justice, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the wireless industry).

In the WARN Act, Congress developed an innovative procedure to address the problem of emergency alerting by securing the participation of interested non-governmental parties in the development and deployment of what has become a 90-character, geo-targeted, succinct alerting capability that would let consumers carrying a wireless device know that there is an imminent threat to health or safety. I am pleased to report, nearly seven years later, that what Congress envisioned in the WARN Act is working as designed to deliver AMBER alerts, imminent threat alerts, and, if necessary, Presidential alerts.

WEA went live in April 2012 and carriers serving 98 percent of U.S. wireless consumers have opted to participate in the program. Since going live, thousands of WEA alerts have been issued and many have played a key role in protecting the public.

For example, the first time an Amber Alert was sent out through the WEA system was in February 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when an 8-month-old was abducted by a family acquaintance. Within minutes of the alert going out, a teenager who received the alert on her device called 911 leading police to the red Kia Sportage described and the missing child.<sup>3</sup> This success was replicated in Pennsylvania in August of this year, when Hostyn Perez-Corza abducted 6 and 8 year old sisters after holding their mother hostage at gunpoint. An Amber Alert was issued to Berks, Chester, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery and Schuylkill counties. After

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.twincities.com/ci\\_22642126/minnesota-cellphone-amber-alert-located-child-and-was](http://www.twincities.com/ci_22642126/minnesota-cellphone-amber-alert-located-child-and-was).

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receiving the Amber Alert, a hotel patron spotted the vehicle outside a hotel in the area. The girls were safely recovered and Perez-Corza was arrested.<sup>4</sup> Later in August, an Amber Alert issued over the WEA system led to the recovery of a 17-month old child abducted during an auto theft in High Point, North Carolina.<sup>5</sup>

WEA also has been used extensively to warn the public about impending weather situations that pose an imminent threat to public safety. Last fall, WEA alerts were used “widely and successfully” in areas affected by Hurricane Sandy.<sup>6</sup> Given the breadth and scope of Sandy, these alerts included blizzard warnings, flash-flood warnings, mandatory evacuation warnings, and shelter-in-place directives. The varying subjects of these alerts and the significant geographic scope over which they were distributed – from West Virginia to Maine – demonstrate the utility of the WEA service.

More recently, in July 2013, a WEA alert in East Windsor, Connecticut notified a camp counselor in a sports dome of an approaching tornado, something that is highly unusual in that part of the country. The counselor moved the 29 children and five counselors in her care to a shelter, as moments later the tornado ripped through destroying the dome.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://readingeagle.com/article.aspx?id=505366>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/08/30/3151730/late-night-amber-alert-helps-find.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.emergencymgmt.com/emergency-blogs/alerts/CMASWEA-Used-Extensively-for-103112>.<http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/13/us/flooding-colorado/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://articles.courant.com/2013-07-02/news/hc-tornado-warning-0702-20130701\\_1\\_windsor-locks-dome-national-weather-service-confirms](http://articles.courant.com/2013-07-02/news/hc-tornado-warning-0702-20130701_1_windsor-locks-dome-national-weather-service-confirms)

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As these examples demonstrate, WEA is working, offering a valuable, mobile augmentation to the Emergency Broadcast System we all grew up with as it gives emergency managers a “game changer”<sup>8</sup> to inform and protect the public. And we’re already working to make the system better through participation in the FCC’s Communications Security, Reliability and Interoperability Council (CSRIC) Working Group 2, which is addressing issues raised during WEA’s implementation for post roll-out study. Specifically, the Working Group will review the WEA and develop appropriate recommendations for action, after examining (1) experiences with WEA since its April 2012 deployment; (2) any technological advances since the original WEA technical recommendations were submitted, and (3) any other relevant issues, as appropriate.

While industry is working hard to make WEA an on-going success, WEA’s effectiveness also depends on how well the public understands and uses the system. While carriers and others in the industry can and do provide important assistance in the area of education, FEMA and other government agencies have an important role to play to promote uniform and comprehensive education across all parts of the country and all affected sectors of the emergency response community. We applaud FEMA on its recent roll-out of a Public Service Announcement on WEA and we agree that this should remain a focus for FEMA and the IPAWS office. Moreover, it is incumbent on alerting authorities to similarly educate their constituents about the alerts they may send, as only they have the knowledge to answer specific questions about incidents and

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<sup>8</sup> <http://fox6now.com/2013/07/02/cell-phone-users-unaware-of-new-emergency-alert-system/>

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alerts in their areas. A wireless provider's customer service rep lacks visibility into specific alerts sent and will not be in a position to answer a subscriber's questions about those alerts.

The wireless industry is committed to working with FEMA and the FCC to ensure that subsequent generations of the system support additional functionality and granularity. With this in mind, we do not believe that wireless carriers that participate in the wireless emergency alerting system should be subject to any new requirements that emanate from the implementation of IPAWS. While IPAWS may help to modernize the distribution of alerts on other communications platforms, the WARN Act framework remains the proper path to deliver and modernize emergency alerts provided over wireless networks. CTIA urges you to keep this in mind as you consider legislative efforts to modernize IPAWS or reauthorize FEMA.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. CTIA looks forward to working with the Subcommittee, FEMA, and others in the public safety community to ensure that WEA continues to offer a unique and useful way to help protect the American public.

**COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**  
*Truth in Testimony Disclosure*

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Pursuant to clause 2(g)(5) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, in the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include: (1) a curriculum vitae; and (2) a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Such statements, with appropriate redaction to protect the privacy of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness appears.

(1) Name: Chris Guttman-McCabe

(2) Other than yourself, name of entity you are representing:

CTIA – The Wireless Association®

(3) Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government (federal, state, local) entity?

**YES**            If yes, please provide the information requested below and attach your curriculum vitae.

Yes. See [http://www.ctia.org/aboutCTIA/leadership\\_team/index.cfm/AID/10280](http://www.ctia.org/aboutCTIA/leadership_team/index.cfm/AID/10280).

**NO**

(4) Please list the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by you or by the entity you are representing:

CTIA has not been the recipient of any federal grants during the specified time period.

Signature



Date

10/30/13