



For Immediate Release
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Citizens Urged to Sign up Now for Jefferson Parish Emergency Alert System

Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard announced that the parish is establishing an electronic emergency alert system to warn first responders and citizens of impending emergencies such as tornadoes, hurricane evacuations, hazardous material spills and terrorist attacks.

The electronic system is called MyStateUSA and is part of the IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert and Warning System) pilot program provided to the entire state by FEMA.

The Jefferson Parish Emergency Management Department and the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office were the first officials in the state trained in the use and operation of the system. The system is being used now to communicate internally among parish departments and other first responders. It will be expanded next month to include private citizens who wish to receive the service.

Parish citizens are encouraged to sign up now for emergency alerts. There is no charge for the service. Citizens can choose to be alerted via e-mails and/or through text messages on their cell phones, alpha numeric pagers, and blackberry type devices. Registering is quick and easy on-line by going to <http://jeffersonparishla.mystateusa.com>. Click on the "Sign Up Here For Alerts" box with the bright yellow bell on the top left side of the page. Fill in the blanks and click the button on the bottom of the page titled "Sign Me Up."

Citizens who do not have access to the internet can enroll to receive the alerts on their electronic devices by calling the Jefferson Parish Department of

Citizens Affairs at 736-6000 and providing their name and cell phone and/or pager numbers that they want to receive the alerts.

Emergency messages can be sent to registered users, either parish-wide or to those in a specific threat area, depending on the nature of the emergency. Periodic testing of the system will occur at least monthly. The messages will be marked as a test.

The system also enables government at all levels to share information during any crisis. Emergency management officials can create emergency communication groups that can be used to transmit emergency information to first responders in the field. For example, all the contact information for firefighters, police, and emergency medical services will be placed in groups so that they can be alerted and updated instantly with general information about the emergency or specific information about their role in the response.

The system can be used to communicate with evacuated citizens after a hurricane or other crisis to provide information about the condition of the parish and when they can return.

Later this year, FEMA and MyStateUSA will begin work on a system that will allow emergency officials to call home phones with emergency messages, such as the threat of a tornado or other impending emergency situations.

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Pat Borne, PIO Aide
Jefferson Parish Public Information Office
Office 504-736-6410
Fax 504-736-6413