Local policies and procedures and the need for alert system improvements

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Can you hear a warning siren inside your home?
Outdoor warning siren network

purpose

• Alert people outside to seek more information about dangerous weather conditions
  – Locally: Tornadoes
Not designed to:

- Alert, awaken people inside structures
- Communicate specific information
- Alert to other severe weather conditions
Allen County systems

• Joint city-county system
  – Operated by Consolidated Communications Partnership (911 dispatch)

• New Haven system
  – Operated by City of New Haven
  – Activated by County and/or New Haven
National Weather Service provides City, County information about weather watches, warnings.
AC Homeland Security warning activation policy: Tornadoes

1. National Weather Service Radio Alert: Tornado warning issued for any part of Allen County
2. International Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (INLETS): Tornado warning message for Allen County
3. Trained spotter/first responder: Tornado on ground AND causing damage
Allen County activation procedures

- Alert first responders via radio
- Activate countywide system
  - Sirens operate 3-5 minutes
  - Not duration of warning
  - No “all-clear” signal
- Monthly test
One county, one system

• Originally designed as civil alert system
  – Backed into weather alerts
• Whole system activated
• No geographic segmentation
Allen County warning siren locations
CHALLENGE AHEAD: AGING SYSTEM, RADIO FREQUENCY CHANGE
Another flaw in the human character is that everyone wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance.

--Kurt Vonnegut
Costs

• Necessary signal upgrades: $825,000 to $2 million
  – Switch from VHF to 800 MHz
  – No additional sirens
Who pays for maintenance?

• Ongoing maintenance in no unit’s budget
  – City?
  – County?
  – Township?
• Tax caps create limits on tax rate increases
Survey feedback: How do you use outdoor warning sirens, get information about severe weather?
Questions?