With approval, NOAA will trial a heads-up SMS alert service for UNESCO IOC ICG/CARIBE EWS Member States in response to requests - especially from SIDS and Americas partners during the period, 2017-2019. This trial SMS notification will be sent to only three vetted officials in each country. This service is not meant to replace official warning systems, but rather to serve as a heads-up to officials, wherever they may be at the time, after which they can seek out full information from established and official communication sources.

Background

a. In 2005, after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, at the request of ITIC and based on requests for assistance from Indian Ocean countries and Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to help notify key officials of Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) tsunami alerts, an SMS/Mobile Phone Text Messaging system was developed. The RANET Project (Radio and Internet for the Communication of Hydro-Meteorological and Climate Related Information) implemented the service, funded by both National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the US Agency for International Development Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). This original RANET SMS Service covered all areas of responsibility served by the PTWC, which included the Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and Pacific. In 2013, the IOTWMS began official Tsunami Service Provider services through Australia, India, and Indonesia, and the PTWC’s interim service (and SMS) was discontinued.

b. In October 2014, the original RANET SMS Service was entirely discontinued with the start of PTWC’s issuance of its Pacific enhanced products. PTWC stopped issuing Tsunami Watch and Warning messages to its international Area of Responsibility (AOR) necessitating a stop to the SMS Service until the new a SMS product could be formulated.

c. Many countries in the ICG continue to make requests to NOAA for an SMS service to provide a heads-up about a potential tsunami threat.

d. In response, the NOAA/NWS and UCAR/COMET®/IEPAS have redeveloped the RANET SMS AlertWatcher system to make it more robust, and easier to monitor and use by the PTWC and ITIC, in cooperation with the UNESCO IOC ICG/PTWS.

Proposal – Trial Resumption of Interim RANET SMS AlertWatcher Service

On the endorsement of the ICG/CARIBE EWS XII, NOAA will conduct a 2-year trial for the resumption of the RANET SMS AlertWatcher, with the following Terms of Reference:

a. Trial Service Description
   o PTWC Heads-up SMS
      • 1 SMS based on an initial PTWC Information Statement,
      • 3 SMS messages for an initial PTWS Threat, issuance of the threat forecast, and the final threat message.
      • Service cannot guarantee 24x7 service and timelines, as the past has shown that the prior service was prone to subscriber or carrier interruptions.
   o Service cannot guarantee 24x7 service and timelines, as the past has shown that the prior service was prone to subscriber or carrier interruptions.

b. Trail Service Customers: CARIBE EWS Member State authorized officials

c. Trail Service Sign-up
   o Announcement through IOC Circular Letter
   o Upon receiving the IOC Circular Letter, interested Member States should indicate their interest in subscribing to the UNESCO IOC CARIBE EWS Technical Secretary, along with current mobile phone numbers of up to 3 persons.
   o Subscriptions will be vetted through UNESCO IOC, and sent to NOAA/NWS/PTWC.
o Member States shall be responsible for keeping the mobile phone numbers current, and for notifying the UNESCO/IOC CARIBE EWS Technical Secretary when an update is required.
d. Trail Service will be re-evaluated for its continuance for the XIIIth Session of the UNESCO IOC ICG/CARIBE EWS.