

108TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 118

To develop and coordinate a national emergency warning system.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 9, 2003

Mr. EDWARDS (for himself and Mr. HOLLINGS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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# A BILL

To develop and coordinate a national emergency warning system.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-  
2       tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Emergency Warning  
5       Act of 2003”.

**6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       The Congress finds the following:

8               (1) Effective public warnings save lives, prevent  
9               economic losses, reduce uncertainty and fear, and  
10              quicken recovery.

5 (3) Over ninety percent of public warnings  
6 issued are related to weather events and natural dis-  
7 asters.

17 (A) protecting the public from the risks to  
18 life and property related to the transportation  
19 of hazardous materials (including chemicals and  
20 spent nuclear materials) by air, water, rail, and  
21 highway;

22 (B) assuring safety from the risks of pipe-  
23 line transport;

1 (C) providing civil sector preparedness and  
2 first-responder training for the Nation's trans-  
3 portation emergencies; and

4 (D) coordinating the restoration of essen-  
5 tial transportation systems after emergencies.

20 (8) Metropolitan and State authorities, in part-  
21 nership with the National Weather Service and other  
22 Federal agencies, have the primary responsibility for  
23 providing emergency warnings and rely on national  
24 procedures, standards, and systems for delivering  
25 such warnings.

1 (9) The current patchwork of warning mecha-  
2 nisms often fails—

## 14 SEC. 3. PURPOSE.

15 The purpose of this Act is to ensure that an effective  
16 public warning system exists to alert Americans to specific  
17 risks from natural disasters, man-made disasters, and  
18 other hazardous events, including chemical and biological  
19 threats and other acts of terrorism.

## 20 SEC. 4. DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ALL-HAZARD WARN- 21 ING SYSTEM.

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the  
23 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Commerce  
24 and the Secretary of Homeland Security, working in co-  
25 ordination with appropriate Federal agencies, shall estab-

1 lish comprehensive national standards and systems for  
2 providing effective public warnings.

3 (b) DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGENCY WARNING NET-  
4 WORK.—In carrying out subsection (a) the Secretary of  
5 Commerce, in coordination with the Secretary of Home-  
6 land Security, the Secretary of Transportation, the Sec-  
7 retary of Defense, representatives of other Federal depart-  
8 ments and agencies, representatives of State and local gov-  
9 ernments, representatives of the private sector, media, and  
10 academia involved in the collection, issuance, dissemina-  
11 tion, and distribution of public warnings, as well as other  
12 interested public and private entities, shall—

13 (1) develop and implement benchmarks for as-  
14 sessing current all-hazard warning capabilities, in-  
15 cluding such capabilities of the National Oceanic  
16 and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather  
17 Service, the United States Geological Survey's Na-  
18 tional Earthquake Information Center, and the De-  
19 partment of Transportation's Office of Pipeline  
20 Safety;

21 (2) conduct research and pilot programs on  
22 ways to determine and improve the effectiveness of  
23 all-hazard warnings;

24 (3) develop specifications for a national back-  
25 bone, modeled after the National Oceanic and At-

1 atmospheric Administration's National Weather Radio,  
2 to be used to collect all-hazard warnings from des-  
3 ignated authorities and route them to appropriate  
4 dissemination systems;

5 (4) work with the Assistant Secretary of Com-  
6 mercial for Communications and Information to use  
7 the full range of communications technologies to  
8 provide warnings, including, as appropriate—

9 (A) traditional telephones, including special  
10 alert rings to warn individuals in their homes or  
11 businesses;

12 (B) wireless technology, including cellular  
13 telephones and pagers; and

14 (C) the Internet, including electronic mail;

15 (5) work with the Federal Communications  
16 Commission to provide warnings to the public  
17 through automatic alert televisions and radios;

18 (6) educate the public about all-hazard warn-  
19 ings; and

20 (7) engage in other necessary or appropriate ac-  
21 tivities to carry out the purpose of this Act.

22 (c) TERMINOLOGY, PROTOCOLS, AND TERRORISM  
23 WARNINGS.—In carrying out subsection (a) the Secretary  
24 of Homeland Security shall—

17 (d) EFFECT ON INTELLIGENCE SOURCES.—The Sec-  
18 retary of Commerce and the Secretary of Homeland Secu-  
19 rity shall coordinate their respective and joint activities  
20 under this section with the Director of Central Intelligence  
21 to ensure that the procedures, standards, and systems es-  
22 tablished under this Act do not adversely affect the protec-  
23 tion of sources and methods.

24 (e) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary of Com-  
25 merce and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall sub-

1 mit a joint report to the Congress on the status of public  
2 warning capability in the United States not later than 6  
3 months after the date of enactment of this Act and every  
4 6 months thereafter.

5 (f) ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—The Secretary of Com-  
6 merce and the Secretary of Homeland Security may utilize  
7 1 or more advisory committees in carrying out their re-  
8 spective and joint responsibilities under this Act.

9 **SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.**

10 In this Act:

11 (1) ALL-HAZARD.—The term “all-hazard”  
12 means an emergency or disaster resulting from—  
13 (A) a natural disaster;  
14 (B) an accident; or  
15 (C) an intentional or negligent act.

16 (2) EFFECTIVE PUBLIC WARNING.—The term  
17 “effective public warning” means practical, com-  
18 prehensible, and timely information given to all indi-  
19 viduals threatened by an all-hazard event sufficient  
20 to enable them to act to protect their safety and  
21 well-being in a timely manner.

22 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

23 There are authorized to be appropriated for the pur-  
24 pose of carrying out the provisions of this Act—

25 (1) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2004; and

(2) such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2005 through 2008.

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