

**First Regular Session  
Seventy-fourth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO**

**INTRODUCED**

LLS NO. 23-0546.03 Michael Dohr x4347

**HOUSE BILL 23-1237**

---

**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**Velasco,**

**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Will,**

---

State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs

---

**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

101 **CONCERNING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE ACCESS IN LOCAL EMERGENCY**  
102 **SITUATIONS.**

---

**Bill Summary**

*(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)*

The bill requires the division of homeland security and emergency management in the department of public safety (division) to conduct a study of what municipalities, sheriff's offices, counties, fire districts, and local 911 agencies need to be able to provide emergency alerts in a minority language and what local 911 agencies need to provide live interpretation during a 911 call. The division shall present the study to the

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.*  
*Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.*

judiciary committees of the house of representatives and senate, or to any successor committees, during the committees' "SMART Act" hearings held during the 2024 session of the general assembly.

Beginning January 1, 2026, the bill requires an evacuation alert and other public safety alerts sent by a county or municipality to be sent by text via a reverse 911 text. In addition to being in English, the alert must also be in a minority language if:

- The county or municipality has at least 2,000 residents who are 18 years of age or older and who speak English less than very well, as defined by the United States bureau of the census American community survey or comparable census data, and who speak a shared minority language at home; or
- At least 2.5% of residents in the county or municipality who are 18 years of age or older speak English less than very well, as defined by the United States bureau of the census American community survey or comparable census data, and speak a shared minority language at home.

---

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly  
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) In the face of natural disasters and other incidents that threaten  
5 lives and property, all people depend on receiving emergency information  
6 to keep them safe;

7 (b) In recent years, Colorado has experienced extremely  
8 destructive wildfires, and it is in the interest of Colorado to be proactive  
9 in building resilient communities;

10 (c) Emergency alerts save lives and direct people to resources and  
11 actions to protect themselves and their communities;

12 (d) Emergency alerts assist first responders do their jobs and  
13 protect people and property;

14 (e) Colorado is a diverse state where over 40 languages are  
15 spoken, per the most recent census data, and diversity is one of Colorado's

1 strengths; and

2 (f) People whose primary language is not English have been left  
3 out of receiving life-saving emergency information.

4 (2) Therefore, the general assembly determines that it is in the best  
5 interest of Colorado to update emergency alert systems to ensure the  
6 systems are able to reach people in multiple languages and work together  
7 to proactively address emergency response for future disasters.

8 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 24-33.5-1623 as  
9 follows:

10 **24-33.5-1623. Language access emergency alert study -**  
11 **definitions - repeal.** (1) (a) THE DIVISION SHALL CONDUCT A STUDY OF  
12 WHAT MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND  
13 LOCAL 911 AGENCIES NEED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY ALERTS  
14 IN A MINORITY LANGUAGE AND WHAT LOCAL 911 AGENCIES NEED TO  
15 PROVIDE LIVE TRANSLATION OR INTERPRETATION DURING A 911 CALL. THE  
16 DIVISION SHALL CONSULT WITH MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES,  
17 COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES IN CONDUCTING THE  
18 STUDY AND ALLOW PUBLIC INPUT.

19 (b) THE STUDY MUST:

20 (I) CONSIDER WHETHER THE NEEDS, INCLUDING THE NEEDS OF LIVE  
21 TRANSLATION OR INTERPRETATION, INCLUDE TECHNOLOGY,  
22 PROGRAMMING, FUNDING, OR STAFFING;

23 (II) IDENTIFY UPDATED AND STREAMLINED EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
24 TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS THAT WOULD PROVIDE THE ABILITY TO SEND  
25 EMERGENCY ALERTS IN A MINORITY LANGUAGE;

26 (III) IDENTIFY REASONABLE MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR AN  
27 EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM OPERATED BY A MUNICIPALITY, SHERIFF'S

1 OFFICE, COUNTY, FIRE DISTRICT, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCY;

2 (IV) IDENTIFY WHETHER THERE ARE EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
3 TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS THAT CAN BE SHARED BY MUNICIPALITIES,  
4 SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES  
5 TO PROVIDE COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PROVIDE ALERTS IN A MINORITY  
6 LANGUAGE;

7 (V) DETERMINE WHAT RESOURCES THE DEPARTMENT NEEDS TO  
8 SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVIDING EMERGENCY ALERTS IN A  
9 MINORITY LANGUAGE BY MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES,  
10 FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES AND THE TIMELINES FOR  
11 IMPLEMENTATION;

12 (VI) DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES, WHICH MAY BE IDENTIFIED BY  
13 REVIEWING PROGRAMS IN OTHER STATES, FOR HIRING MULTILINGUAL AND  
14 MULTICULTURAL STAFF TO AID IN PROVIDING MULTILINGUAL EMERGENCY  
15 RESPONSES, INCLUDING LIVE TRANSLATION OR INTERPRETATION, AND  
16 ALERTS;

17 (VII) IDENTIFY RESOURCES, INCLUDING FEDERAL FUNDING  
18 OPPORTUNITIES, TO IMPLEMENT A GRANT PROGRAM TO ASSIST  
19 MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL  
20 911 AGENCIES IN OBTAINING EMERGENCY RESPONSE TECHNOLOGY  
21 SYSTEMS THAT CAN PROVIDE EMERGENCY ALERTS IN A MINORITY  
22 LANGUAGE; AND

23 (VIII) RECOMMEND AN EFFECTIVE DATE FOR SECTION 24-33.5-432  
24 CREATED IN THIS HOUSE BILL 23-\_\_\_\_\_.

25 (c) THE DIVISION SHALL PRESENT ITS STUDY TO THE JUDICIARY  
26 COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE, OR TO ANY  
27 SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES, DURING THE COMMITTEES' HEARINGS HELD

1 DURING THE 2024 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PURSUANT TO THE  
2 "SMART ACT", PART 2 OF ARTICLE 7 OF TITLE 2.

3 (2) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION:

4 (a) "INTERPRETATION" MEANS THE SPOKEN CONVERSION OF ONE  
5 LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER.

6 (b) "TRANSLATION" MEANS THE WRITTEN CONVERSION OF ONE  
7 LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER.

8 (3) THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024.

9 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 24-33.5-432 as  
10 follows:

11 **24-33.5-432. Law enforcement or emergency alerts - minority**  
12 **language - revisor's notice - effective date.** (1) WHEN A COUNTY OR  
13 MUNICIPALITY ISSUES AN EVACUATION ALERT OR OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY  
14 EMERGENCY ALERT, SUCH AS AN ACTIVE SHOOTER OR SHELTER-IN-PLACE  
15 ALERT, THE ALERT MUST BE SENT BY TEXT VIA A REVERSE 911 TEXT IN  
16 ADDITION TO BEING SENT TO DESIGNATED MEDIA OUTLETS AND OTHER  
17 ENTITIES.

18 (2) IN ADDITION TO BEING IN ENGLISH, THE ALERT MUST ALSO BE  
19 IN A MINORITY LANGUAGE IF:

20 (a) A COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY HAS AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND  
21 RESIDENTS WHO ARE EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER AND WHO SPEAK  
22 ENGLISH LESS THAN VERY WELL, AS DEFINED BY THE UNITED STATES  
23 BUREAU OF THE CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY OR COMPARABLE  
24 CENSUS DATA, AND WHO SPEAK A SHARED MINORITY LANGUAGE AT HOME;  
25 OR

26 (b) AT LEAST TWO AND ONE-HALF PERCENT OF RESIDENTS IN A  
27 COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY WHO ARE EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER

1 SPEAK ENGLISH LESS THAN VERY WELL, AS DEFINED BY THE UNITED  
2 STATES BUREAU OF THE CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY OR  
3 COMPARABLE CENSUS DATA, AND SPEAK A SHARED MINORITY LANGUAGE  
4 AT HOME.

5 (3) THE STATE MAY PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO COUNTIES AND  
6 MUNICIPALITIES IN IMPLEMENTING THIS SECTION.

7 (4) THIS SECTION TAKES EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2026, OR ON THE  
8 DATE IDENTIFIED IN THE REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-33.5-1623  
9 (1)(b)(VIII), WHICHEVER IS EARLIER. THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF  
10 HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SHALL NOTIFY THE  
11 REVISOR OF STATUTES IN WRITING OF THE DATE ON WHICH THE CONDITION  
12 SPECIFIED IN THIS SUBSECTION (4) HAS OCCURRED BY E-MAILING THE  
13 NOTICE TO REVISOROFSTATUTES.GA@COLEG.GOV.

14 **SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
15 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the  
16 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except  
17 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V  
18 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this  
19 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take  
20 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in  
21 November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the  
22 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.