

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

**PREAMENDED**

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee  
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 23-0546.03 Michael Dohr x4347

**HOUSE BILL 23-1237**

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**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**Velasco,**

**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Will,**

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State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs  
Appropriations

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

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

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**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.

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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) Multi-hazard early warning systems are a cost-effective  
5 emergency and disaster risk reduction measure that have resulted in  
6 saving peoples' lives, reducing disruptions, reducing property losses, and  
7 minimizing economic losses;

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

11 (c) Multi-hazard early warning systems provide a good return on  
12 investment. The 2019 Global Commission on Adaptation report, "Adapt  
13 Now", found early warning systems provide a more than tenfold return on  
14 investment;

15 (d) Multi-hazard early warning systems are only as strong as their

1 weakest link, and one break or delay in information transfer, such as the  
2 failure to communicate warnings in inclusive languages, may derail the  
3 entire effort;

4 (e) Colorado is a diverse state where over 40 languages are  
5 spoken, per the most recent census data, and diversity is one of its  
6 strengths; and

7 (f) Early warning systems and dissemination alerts need to reach  
8 and better support at-risk communities in a time- and language-sensitive  
9 manner and focus on the last-mile outreach using a mix of communication  
10 channels. Collecting information about the state's emergency response  
11 systems can inform future legislation to improve public safety.

12 (2) Therefore, the general assembly determines that it is in the best  
13 interests of the people of the state of Colorado to update the state's  
14 emergency alert systems to ensure the systems are able to reach people in  
15 multiple languages and to work together to proactively address  
16 emergency response for future disasters.

17 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 23-20-145 as  
18 follows:

19 **23-20-145. Language access emergency alert study -**  
20 **definitions - repeal.** (1) (a) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO'S NATURAL  
21 HAZARDS CENTER SHALL CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHAT  
22 MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES, COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL  
23 911 AGENCIES NEED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY ALERTS IN  
24 MINORITY LANGUAGES BY JULY 1, 2024, AND WHAT LOCAL 911 AGENCIES  
25 NEED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE LIVE INTERPRETATION DURING A 911 CALL BY  
26 JULY 1, 2024. THE CENTER SHALL CONSULT WITH THE DIVISION OF  
27 HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE

1 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, MUNICIPALITIES, SHERIFF'S OFFICES,  
2 COUNTIES, FIRE DISTRICTS, AND LOCAL 911 AGENCIES IN CONDUCTING THE  
3 STUDY AND ALLOW PUBLIC INPUT.

4 (b) THE STUDY MUST:

5 (I) IDENTIFY THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF MULTI-HAZARD  
6 EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO EASILY AND  
7 SUCCESSFULLY REACH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITHOUT HAVING TO OPT  
8 IN, AS WELL AS OPT-IN OPTIONS, OUTPUTS FOR EMERGENCY ALERT  
9 SYSTEMS AND MESSAGES, AND THE ABILITY TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY  
10 ALERTS BY USING TRANSLATIONS IN MINORITY LANGUAGES;

11 (II) SURVEY STATE AGENCIES, COUNTIES, MUNICIPALITIES,  
12 SHERIFF'S OFFICES, FIRE DISTRICTS, FIRE AUTHORITIES, AND LOCAL 911  
13 AGENCIES TO IDENTIFY THE CURRENT CAPABILITIES OF EXISTING  
14 EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEMS USED IN COLORADO AND COMPARE THEM TO  
15 THE IDENTIFIED ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS;

16 (III) IDENTIFY GAPS IN THE CAPABILITIES OF EXISTING EMERGENCY  
17 ALERT SYSTEMS REQUIRING CORRECTION;

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

24 (V) DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES, WHICH MAY BE IDENTIFIED BY  
25 REVIEWING PROGRAMS IN OTHER STATES, FOR HIRING MULTILINGUAL AND  
26 MULTICULTURAL STAFF;

27 (VI) DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING LOCAL

1 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITH CONNECTIONS TO POPULATIONS THAT  
2 SPEAK A MINORITY LANGUAGE; AND

3 (VII) PRESENT RESEARCH REGARDING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY  
4 ALERTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AFTER CONSULTATION WITH A  
5 STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION THAT ADVOCATES FOR PEOPLE WITH  
6 DISABILITIES.

7 (c) THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO'S NATURAL HAZARD CENTER  
8 SHALL SUBMIT ITS STUDY REPORT TO THE DIVISION OF HOMELAND  
9 SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC  
10 SAFETY AND TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY NOVEMBER 1, 2023.

11 (2) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION:

12 (a) "INTERPRETATION" MEANS THE SPOKEN CONVERSION OF ONE  
13 LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER LANGUAGE.

14 (b) "TRANSLATION" MEANS THE WRITTEN CONVERSION OF ONE  
15 LANGUAGE INTO ANOTHER LANGUAGE.

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

17 **SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly hereby finds,  
18 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate  
19 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.