



Hawaii Emergency Worker Who Triggered False Alarm Fired

The Federal Communications Commission said on January 31 that the false ballistic missile alert sent throughout Hawaii on January 13 occurred when the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) worker in charge of alerts believed there “was a real emergency, not a drill.”

The employee believed that a ballistic missile had actually been fired at the state.

The New American reported back on January 16 that Hawaiians received on their cell phones and electronic devices a terrifying text message: “BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.”

Loudspeakers began to issue warnings. A bright red caption was superimposed across the top of television screens warning people to seek shelter — interspersed with the ominous message, “This is not a drill.” The islands were in a near state of panic.

A report in the January 30 *Washington Post* reported that the employee who sent out the false alert, who has not been publicly identified, was fired last week. State officials said his name will be released when any disciplinary appeals are complete.

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency’s top official — administrator Vern T. Miyagi — “has taken full responsibility” for the incident and resigned on January 30, said Major General Joe Logan, the state adjutant general, who oversees the department.

A copy of a January 29 [memo](#) from retired Brigadier General Bruce E. Oliveira, the investigating officer for the incident, to Logan was posted on the HI-EMA website the following day. The memo contained a detailed summary of the events leading up to the false alert on January 13. In the report, the individual who sent out the false alert was named “Employee 1.”

The timeline of events noted that “Employee 4” initiated the BMA (Ballistic Missile Alert) drill at 0806, after which Employee 1 logged into the AlertSense system and waited for Employee 3’s announcement of the simulated siren warning activation.

The memo stated:

The exercise message is preceded and ended with “EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE” during a practice drill. The simulated PACOM (United States Pacific Command) message on 13 January





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2018, was preceded and ended with “EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE.” Employee 1 stated that he/she did not hear “EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE,” but claimed he/she heard “This is not a drill.”

When scrolling through a drop-down menu, Employee 1 had two choices: “Test Missile Alert” (which sends a message internally to the agency) and “Missile Alert” (which sends the message to the public). Employee 1 clicked “yes” for the “missile alert.”

Just one to two minutes later, at 0807 and 0808, several individuals (identified as Employee 13, Employee 6, and the Adjutant General) called the SWP (State Warning Point) and received confirmation of the “false alert.”

And a minute after that (0809), Employee 4 used the HAWAS (Hawaii Warning System) broadcast to the counties: “Attention all stations — This is the State Warning Point — There is no ballistic missile threat to Hawaii — this is a drill — I repeat, this is a drill.”

At 0810 the Honolulu Police Department called SWP and was notified of the False Alert by HI-EMA.

At 0811 the State Siren Vendor called Telecom and was notified that it was a false alert.

However, for some reason, Employee 1 did not respond to correct his error. The summary notes:

0812 — Employee 5 directed Employee 1 to send out the cancel message on AlertSense. Employee 5 stated that Employee 1 just sat there and didn’t respond.

At 0813 SWP issued a cancellation of the CDW message. Between 0814 and 0845 HI-EMA employees continued to contact various agencies to notify them that the alert was false. At 0845, a message was broadcast over local TV and radio, including a TV crawler message reading: “False alert. There is no missile threat to Hawaii.”

The memo noted, in part:

Employee 1 has been a source of concern for the same SWP staff for over 10 years. Employee 1’s poor performance has been counseled and documented and the SWP members have stated that they are “not comfortable with Employee 1 as a supervisor, two-man team, or as part of the SWP in general. He does not take initiative and has to be directed before he takes action. He is unable to comprehend the situation at hand and has confused real life events and drills on at least two separate occasions.”

Among the findings listed in the memo was this needed change of procedure:

The established BMA checklist did not include a response protocol in the event of a false ballistic missile message. There was a cancel message which stopped further ballistic missile messages from displaying, but does not send a new message to the public. Eventually a CEM [Civil Emergency Message] was developed and sent. The established protocol has since been updated to include a False Alert message.

If we can conclude anything from this unfortunate incident that sent an unnecessary, panic-inducing scare to residents of Hawaii it is this.

Obviously, the incompetent “Employee 1” should have been removed from his position many years ago. Sensitive positions such as this employee held, upon which the public relies for vital instructions during emergencies, should only be occupied by staff members who have demonstrated unimpeachable presence of mind and flawless judgment during stressful situations. Would we tolerate such sloppy



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behavior in, for example, an air-traffic controller?

The other conclusion we might make is that though no origin for the nonexistent missiles was named, given the tense relations the United States presently has with communist North Korea, that was the presumed source of the missile attack.

The mood and mentality of the public, especially in Hawaii, which is thousands of miles closer to North Korea than is the U.S. mainland, is similar to what existed during the Cold War when Americans were fearful of a Soviet ICBM attack.

It is unquestionably true that North Korea has relentlessly been pursuing operational long-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. However, our government's response to this threat has usually been to ask to UN to impose additional sanctions on Pyongyang.

As we concluded our article last November, "N. Korea Tests Missile With Potential to Hit U.S.; Trump Calls for Additional Sanctions": "The best response to North Korea's weapons programs is to take a unilateral approach that relies neither on the UN nor China for support. We can impose our own sanctions, which should consist of refraining from trade not only with North Korea, but with any nation that trades with Pyongyang, China being the prime example. We should also put in place the best anti-missile system we can build, as a further deterrent to North Korea's threats."

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