



PUBLIC NOTICE

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DA 13-988
May 2, 2013

PUBLIC SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY BUREAU ENCOURAGES STATE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEES TO REVIEW AND AMEND STATE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM PLANS TO ENSURE UP-TO-DATE EAS MONITORING ASSIGNMENTS

EB Docket No. 04-296

Section 11.21 of the Federal Communications Commission's (Commission) rules¹ describes the requirements for State Emergency Alert System (EAS) Plans. These plans contain the guidelines that must be followed by EAS Participants' personnel, emergency officials, and National Weather Service personnel to activate the EAS.² These guidelines include identification of monitoring assignments to ensure that EAS Participants within each state are able to receive transmitted alerts. The Chief of the Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB or the Bureau) must approve these plans prior to implementation to ensure that they are consistent with national plans, FCC regulations, and EAS operation.³

On April 12, 2013, PSHSB issued its report, "Strengthening the Emergency Alert System (EAS): Lessons Learned from the Nationwide EAS Test."⁴ That report included an analysis of data submitted by EAS Participants in connection with their participation in the first ever nationwide test of the EAS which the Commission and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conducted on November 9, 2011. PSHSB concluded that the test demonstrated that the EAS alert distribution architecture is basically sound, but identified certain problems disclosed by the test and included recommendations designed to improve the EAS moving forward.⁵ Among others, PSHSB recommended that the Commission issue "a Public Notice encouraging states to review and as necessary update their EAS plans to ensure that they contain accurate and up-to-date information regarding monitoring assignments as required by FCC rules."⁶

¹ 47 C.F.R. § 11.21.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Strengthening the Emergency Alert System (EAS): Lessons Learned from the Nationwide EAS Test*, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (April 2013), available at <http://www.fcc.gov/document/strengthening-emergency-alert-system>.

⁵ *Id.*, at 3-4; 16-18.

⁶ *Id.*, at 4; 17.

Accordingly, PSHSB in this Public Notice reminds the State Emergency Communications Committees (SECC), and any other entities involved in the drafting of State EAS Plans, that these plans must be kept up to date, filed with the FCC, and should include a data table, in computer readable form, clearly showing monitoring assignments and the specific primary and backup path for emergency action notification (EAN) messages that are formatted in the EAS Protocol,⁷ from the Primary Entry Point (PEP) to each station in the plan.⁸ PSHSB encourages SECCs and other entities involved in the drafting of State EAS Plans to review their plans, ensure that the plans are consistent with the above stated requirements and otherwise compliant with Commission rules, and update the plans and file them with the Bureau as necessary.

Moreover, as of June 30, 2012, EAS Participants are required by Commission rules to be able to receive EAS alerts utilizing the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), as transmitted by FEMA.⁹ State and local alert originators may also utilize CAP-based alerting, but there is no federal requirement that they do so. If, however, a state's emergency alert system is capable of initiating EAS messages formatted in CAP, its State EAS Plan must include specific and detailed information describing how such messages will be aggregated and distributed to EAS Participants within the state, including the monitoring requirements associated with distributing such messages.¹⁰ If a State EAS Plan currently on file with the Commission is up-to-date except for the required description of CAP monitoring requirements, the SECC may file an amendment in letter format that specifies (a) the manner in which the state fulfills the CAP monitoring requirement, and (b) the filing date of the plan that the amendment supplements.

Questions concerning procedures for filing amendments to State EAS Plans, including letters describing state CAP alert aggregation and distribution, should be directed to Bonnie Hauther (Gay), Policy and Licensing Division, PSHSB. Ms. Hauther can be reached at (202) 418-1228 or Bonnie.Gay@fcc.gov.

For further information regarding this Public Notice, contact Gregory Cooke, Associate Chief, Policy and Licensing Division, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, (202) 418-2351 or Gregory.Cooke@fcc.gov.

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⁷ The protocol is specified in 47 C.F.R. § 11.31.

⁸ 47 C.F.R. § 11.21(a).

⁹ 47 C.F.R. § 11.52(d)(2). CAP is an open, interoperable XML-based standard that allows an alert initiator to deliver information-rich alerts to multiple devices.

¹⁰ 47 C.F.R. § 11.21(a).