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6 LISTEN HERE: WHY AMERICANS VALUE AM RADIO

7 TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2023

8 House of Representatives,

9 Subcommittee on Communications and Technology,

10 Committee on Energy and Commerce,

11 Washington, D.C.

12

13

14 The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m. in
15 Room 2123, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Bob Latta
16 [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

17

18 Present: Representatives Latta, Bilirakis, Walberg,
19 Carter, Dunn, Curtis, Joyce, Weber, Allen, Balderson,
20 Fulcher, Pfluger, Harshbarger, Cammack, Obernolte, Rodgers
21 (ex officio); Matsui, Clarke, Veasey, Soto, Eshoo, Cardenas,

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22 Fletcher, Dingell, Kuster, Kelly, and Pallone (ex officio).

23 Also present: Representative Johnson.

24

25

26 Staff Present: Kate Arey, Digital Director; Sarah
27 Burke, Deputy Staff Director; Slate Herman, Counsel, C&T;
28 Nate Hodson, Staff Director; Noah Jackson, Clerk, C&T; Sean
29 Kelly, Press Secretary; Peter Kielty, General Counsel; Emily
30 King, Member Services Director; Giulia Leganski, Professional
31 Staff Member, C&T; John Lin, Senior Counsel, C&T; Kate
32 O'Connor, Chief Counsel, C&T; Emma Schultheis, Staff
33 Assistant; Evan Viau, Professional Staff Member, C&T; Hannah
34 Anton, Minority Policy Analyst; Keegan Cardman, Minority
35 Intern; Anthony Choi, Minority Intern; Jennifer Epperson,
36 Minority Chief Counsel, C&T; Waverly Gordon, Minority Deputy
37 Staff Director and General Counsel; Tiffany Guarascio,
38 Minority Staff Director; Perry Hamilton, Minority Member
39 Services and Outreach Manager; Dan Miller, Minority
40 Professional Staff Member; Michael Scurato, Minority FCC
41 Detailee; Andrew Souvall, Minority Director of
42 Communications, Outreach, and Member Services; and Johanna

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43 Thomas, Minority Counsel.

44

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45 *Mr. Latta. The Subcommittee on Communications and
46 Technology will come to order, and the chair recognizes
47 himself for five minutes for an opening statement.

48 And again, thank you very much to our witnesses for
49 being here today to examine the importance of AM radio
50 receivers in vehicles.

51 AM radio has been an integral part of our society for
52 well over a century, connecting Americans to local news and
53 serving as the backbone to our nation's emergency
54 communications infrastructure. Over 45 million Americans
55 tune into AM radio each month. They rely on it for local
56 news, weather, sports, and emergency alerts. Its unique
57 frequency characteristics allow signals to travel far and
58 wide, overcoming geographical barriers and reaching both
59 urban and remote areas. This makes AM radio an invaluable
60 tool during times of crisis.

61 When hurricanes, tornadoes, or other natural disasters
62 strike, AM radio remains steadfast, providing vital
63 information to those in affected areas when other
64 communication channels fail. In fact, a few years ago, when
65 I was traveling through my district, when I came on the radio

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66 there was a tornado on the ground. I switched to my local AM
67 radio station playing real-time weather alerts that allowed
68 me to know the exact path of the tornado. With that
69 information, I was able to travel -- safely travel home,
70 avoiding the storm's path.

71 In times of emergency, information is power, and AM
72 radio remains a primary source for emergency reports. Local
73 broadcasters have long served as the trusted voice delivering
74 real time updates, weather alerts, evacuation instructions,
75 and other critical information that can mean the difference
76 between life and death.

77 Beyond emergency situations, AM radio plays a key role
78 in local news and community engagement. From news and
79 cultural events to sports coverage and talk shows, AM radio
80 keeps us connected to our communities. These stations
81 provide a platform for discussion, education, entertainment.

82 Importantly, AM radio reaches a wide demographic,
83 ranging from seniors to rural and underserved communities.
84 It serves as a source of information that is accessible to
85 all, regardless of socioeconomic status or access to the
86 Internet.

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87 Today's hearing is the result of announcements made by
88 many auto manufacturers that they intend to remove AM radio
89 in certain vehicles due to the interference between the AM
90 radio receivers and batteries in electric vehicles.

91 As some manufacturers shared in response to a letter I
92 led last month with my colleague, the gentleman from
93 Indiana's 6th district, the electromagnetic waves emitted by
94 an electric vehicle's battery interfere with the incoming AM
95 radio waves, causing the sound to buzz and fade. To solve
96 this interference, some auto manufacturers are installing
97 shields and filters to protect the receiver against this
98 interference. In other cases, it appears that cars are
99 equipping their new models with AM radio capability, but have
100 it disabled. However, some automakers are considering or are
101 actively removing AM radio receivers from new vehicles
102 altogether, regardless of engine type.

103 I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about
104 the public safety dangers of removing AM radio, and possible
105 solutions to combating signal interference. Removing AM
106 radio receivers from vehicles means individuals may miss out
107 on critical lifesaving updates. We must ensure that no

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108 community is left behind, no voice is silenced, and no
109 emergency response is compromised.

110 [The prepared statement of Mr. Latta follows:]

111

112 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

113

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114 *Mr. Latta. Again, I want to thank our witnesses for
115 being here, and I now recognize the ranking member of the
116 subcommittee, the gentlelady from the 7th district of
117 California, for five minutes for an opening statement.

118 *Ms. Matsui. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am
119 glad we are holding this hearing today. While this issue has
120 been gaining attention nationally, I think that this
121 committee can help raise awareness among consumers.

122 As I said in my statement announcing this hearing, AM
123 radio provides Americans a crucial public service. Whether
124 that is information during an emergency, local -- or local
125 news, or community-specific programing, AM radio delivers for
126 consumers.

127 While the media landscape continues to evolve, AM radio
128 remains a mainstay for millions of Americans. According to
129 the National Association of Broadcasters, 82 million
130 Americans listen to AM stations each month. For these
131 consumers, AM radio is indispensable. But even for those of
132 us who aren't listening daily, AM radio represents a critical
133 lifeline when disaster strikes.

134 Americans know all too well the need for diverse and

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135 redundant emergency notifications. During wildfires, texts
136 and other mobile alerts provide information that can save
137 lives. But these notifications only work when mobile
138 networks are still intact and operational. If they fail, as
139 we have seen after wildfires, hurricanes, and tornadoes, we
140 must have a backup. That is where AM radio comes into play,
141 because the system is resilient, and the spectrum can travel
142 long distances. AM radio is a reliable backbone for
143 emergency alert system. FEMA acknowledges this role when
144 describing the emergency alert system, saying, "In many
145 cases, radio and TV stations continue to operate when other
146 means of alerting the public are unavailable, providing a
147 layer of resiliency.'`

148 Many subscription services depend on Internet access,
149 and other public warning methods rely on utility power. In
150 California, wildfires have destroyed cell towers and taken
151 utility power down over large areas. For the many California
152 families that have been forced to flee their homes without a
153 mobile signal or power, going out without AM radio would be
154 unthinkable and unacceptable.

155 Imagine in that moment, with your family in the car,

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156 frantically looking for emergency information, only to find
157 out your car doesn't have an AM radio. I don't think anyone
158 should have that experience. With more than 330 million
159 vehicles registered in California, the loss of AM radio in
160 cars would represent a devastating setback for emergency
161 communications.

162 But we know AM radio is more than just a lifeline during
163 an emergency. For many it represents an irreplaceable
164 connection to their community. As local news options grow
165 few and far between, AM radio offers free, hyperlocal
166 journalism. From high school football scores to city council
167 coverage, AM radio can provide consumers the local coverage
168 they can't get anywhere else. And in many areas, AM radio is
169 broadcasting in Spanish, Vietnamese, and other languages
170 spoken in the community. So in many ways, AM radio remains a
171 lifeline.

172 As we continue to push advances in mobility, it is
173 important that we balance innovation with access. I am
174 hopeful this hearing will help us do just that.

175 [The prepared statement of Ms. Matsui follows:]

176

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177 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

178

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179 *Ms. Matsui. I am excited to hear from our witnesses
180 today. And with that, I yield the balance of my time.

181 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back the
182 balance of her time. The chair now recognizes five minutes
183 to the chair of the full committee, the gentlelady from
184 Washington.

185 *The Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the
186 witnesses for being here today.

187 My constituents in eastern Washington rely on AM radio.
188 It is how they hear the news in their communities, listen to
189 sports, and receive information during emergencies. In many
190 parts of my district, FM radio is spotty, and there is no
191 access to broadband. So AM radio is the only option, which
192 is why it is concerning that some vehicle manufacturers have
193 taken steps recently to remove AM radios from new car models.
194 This is in part a result of the Biden Administration's rush
195 to a green agenda as they push for electric vehicles, because
196 electric vehicle batteries cause interference to AM
197 frequencies, resulting in bad reception.

198 The decision to remove AM radio from cars would affect
199 tens of millions of Americans. Some estimates suggest that

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200 more than 45 million Americans tune in to AM radio each
201 month. While people in some parts of the country have been
202 able to take advantage of alternative options in vehicles for
203 accessing AM radio like through a streaming service, many
204 parts of the country still lack access to reliable broadband
205 services, meaning this option is unavailable. That includes
206 people in my community, who are raising the alarm and sending
207 the message that they like AM radio. They are concerned that
208 they would lose access to vital information services like the
209 National Public Warning System.

210 Unlike its FM counterpart, AM radio signals travel long
211 distances and pass through obstacles such as buildings,
212 hills, and dense vegetation. These characteristics ensure
213 that potentially lifesaving information reaches a large
214 audience, especially in rural areas with limited access to
215 other forms of communication.

216 The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, has also
217 worked to reinforce AM radio base stations to mitigate risks
218 resulting from events like natural disasters. And rural
219 communities in particular rely on the service provided by AM
220 radio, especially when they have only limited access to high-

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221 speed broadband and streamed services, or they don't have any
222 access at all.

223 These services are important. They are important for
224 farmers and ranchers who use AM radio to receive information
225 on the weather, crop reports, and other vital information for
226 their livelihoods. AM radio fosters a sense of local
227 identity, connecting people through regional programming that
228 reflects the unique perspectives and traditions of their
229 communities. Local media on AM radio is closer to the
230 people, telling the stories and sharing the perspectives that
231 the national news doesn't always cover and sometimes ignores.
232 And it plays a crucial role in government accountability,
233 acting as a watchdog for local school boards, county
234 officials, regional courts, and other government bodies.

235 Further, AM radio continues to be a key outlet for talk
236 radio shows to connect with audiences across the country.
237 Rush Limbaugh, for example, had around 15 million listeners
238 tuning in each week to his show, which was broadcast across
239 650 stations at its peak. These are vital sources of
240 information that keep people engaged and connected to their
241 local community, region, and voices and perspectives they

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242 value in their lives. Whether they are tuning in for the
243 local news, agricultural or weather reports, information
244 during an emergency, or to listen to their favorite talk show
245 personality, AM radio continues to be a popular way for
246 Americans to stay connected.

247 I look forward to our discussion today, and I am
248 grateful for our experts for being here on the panel to share
249 our goal to both celebrate American innovation and ensure
250 people can use this critical communications tool and listen
251 to AM radio stations important to them.

252

253

254 [The prepared statement of The Chair follows:]

255

256 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

257

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258 *The Chair. I yield back.

259 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back, and
260 the chair now recognizes the ranking member of the full
261 committee, the gentleman from New Jersey, for five minutes.

262 *Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Chairman Latta. AM radio
263 stations play a critical role in our nation's communications
264 network, and that is why I was so concerned when some
265 automakers recently announced that they were planning to
266 phase out AM radio from their electric vehicle models.

267 I know firsthand how important AM radio can be during an
268 emergency. In October 2012, after pummeling the Caribbean,
269 Superstorm Sandy slammed the New Jersey coast with 80-mile-
270 per-hour sustained winds and rain. There was extensive
271 flooding and damage along the coasts of New Jersey and New
272 York, including many of the beach and bay shore towns in my
273 district. States as far west as Kentucky suffered power
274 outages that lasted for days. Communications infrastructure
275 was heavily damaged, including 25 percent of cellular towers
276 across 10 states.

277 Now, some of my constituents went days without power and
278 telephone and Internet connections, largely isolated and

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279 seeking whatever information they could get. A number of
280 them relied on broadcast AM radio stations to get up-to-the-
281 minute information, like where to get water, gas, and
282 groceries. And in some cases their best source for an AM
283 radio was their vehicle. So that is why I was so troubled to
284 learn that EV manufacturers had made the unilateral decision
285 to remove AM radio from their cars and, as I understand it,
286 without notice, to consumers who have, for the most part,
287 gotten used to having AM radio as part of a standard auto
288 package.

289 I am proud of this committee's bipartisan work to
290 encourage and promote more resilient communications networks,
291 including my SANDy Act.

292 And with the growing prevalence and reliability of
293 wireless alerting systems, some people may wonder why we are
294 concerned about the loss of AM tuners in cars, particularly
295 given newer technology like satellites and IP networks. The
296 answer is that AM has proven its value in emergency
297 situations, which is particularly important now, as the
298 worsening climate crisis unleashes new and more powerful
299 storms around the country.

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300 Despite our continued efforts to make cellular towers
301 and equipment more resilient, they are still vulnerable
302 during extreme weather events. Last week, when a typhoon hit
303 Guam, preliminary press reports suggested that many cellular
304 towers and FM stations throughout the island were knocked
305 out, but AM stations stayed on the air. AM radio broadcast
306 stations are the backbone of the Emergency Alert System
307 infrastructure, which delivers critical safety alerts during
308 public emergencies. During cellular network outages, AM
309 broadcast frequencies are still able to travel 100 miles or
310 more to deliver public safety communications. So it is no
311 wonder that seven former Federal Emergency Management Agency
312 administrators wrote to Transportation Secretary Buttigieg
313 earlier this year, urging the Federal Government to seek
314 assurances from auto manufacturers to preserve AM radio
315 access in vehicles for public safety.

316 And we can't be satisfied by reliance on emergency
317 content delivered through Internet or satellite services that
318 require a subscription or data plans. These services put
319 consumers on the hook for additional monthly or annual costs.
320 The government makes our country's electromagnetic airwaves

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321 available at no charge to broadcasters, who then carry these
322 important alerts and messages to the public at no cost. So
323 we must ensure this vital information is free to consumers.

324 Now, thankfully, AM content is not just emergency and
325 disaster information. For most of the time, broadcast
326 programming content runs the gamut. In fact, according to the
327 FCC, AM stations are more likely than FM stations or other
328 kinds of media outlets to be owned by women and Black or
329 Hispanic Americans. As we look to increase media diversity,
330 we should keep in mind that AM radio is an important part of
331 our nation's multi-cultural media programming.

332 These are the main reasons that we simply cannot allow
333 EV manufacturers now or in the future to remove AM radio from
334 their EV models.

335 So I want to thank Chairs Rodgers and Latta, Ranking
336 Member Matsui, also Mr. Pence for, you know, basically taking
337 the lead in holding this important hearing and dealing with
338 this issue.

339 [The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

340

341 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

342

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343 *Mr. Pallone. I also would like to introduce Lieutenant
344 Colonel Chris DeMaise, who was the commanding officer of the
345 emergency management section of the New Jersey Office of
346 Emergency Management.

347 Thanks for being here today.

348 Over the years, he has also led emergency responses to
349 hurricanes and other disasters throughout the country.

350 So we appreciate your joining us today to share your
351 expertise and perspective on the importance of AM radio to
352 emergency management. And thank you for all that you do for
353 New Jersey.

354 Now, of course, I have been mentioning New Jersey quite
355 a bit, but I don't think there is anything I said that
356 doesn't apply to the rest of the country, as well, Mr.
357 Chairman. I yield back.

358 *Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much. The gentleman
359 yields back the balance of his time.

360 We want to thank our witnesses for being with us today
361 and taking the time to testify before the subcommittee.

362 You will have the opportunity to give an opening
363 statement, followed by a round of questions from the members.

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364 I would like to note for our witnesses that you will see
365 the timer boxes right there in front of you so that when the
366 light will turn yellow you will have one minute remaining,
367 and when it turns red your time has expired.

368 One other thing I would like to note is that we have a
369 second subcommittee on Energy and Commerce running today, so
370 we have members that will be stepping out to go to that
371 committee -- subcommittee upstairs. So it is not that people
372 are just leaving, they just have to go to another
373 subcommittee. So I just want to alert you to that.

374 We have three witnesses for the hearing today, including
375 Mr. Jerry Chapman, president of Woof Boom Radio; Mr. Scott
376 Schmidt, vice president of Safety Policy Alliance for
377 Automotive Innovation; and Lieutenant Colonel Christopher
378 DeMaise, homeland security branch commander, New Jersey State
379 Police.

380 And again, we appreciate you all being here today, and
381 we look forward to your testimony.

382 And Mr. Chapman, you are recognized for five minutes for
383 your opening statement.

384

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385 STATEMENT OF JERRY CHAPMAN, PRESIDENT, WOOF BOOM RADIO; SCOTT
386 SCHMIDT, VICE PRESIDENT, SAFETY POLICY, ALLIANCE FOR
387 AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION; AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHRISTOPHER M.
388 DEMAISE, HOMELAND SECURITY BRANCH COMMANDER, NEW JERSEY STATE
389 POLICE

390

391 STATEMENT OF JERRY CHAPMAN

392

393 *Mr. Chapman. Good morning, Chairs Latta and McMorris
394 Rodgers, Ranking Members Matsui and Pallone, and members of
395 this subcommittee. My name is J Chapman. I am the president
396 and owner of Woof Boom Radio. We operate 12 radio stations
397 serving Indiana and Ohio. Three of those radio stations are
398 AM radio stations. In Lima it is WCIT; in Anderson it is
399 WHBU; and in Muncie it is WMUN.

400 I also appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf
401 of the National Association of Broadcasters and more than
402 6,400 local television and radio stations that provide free
403 and valuable service to our hometowns every day.

404 I would like to take a quick moment and share a personal
405 story about the role of AM in times of a crisis. In June of

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406 2009 I was the general manager of a group of radio stations
407 in Rockford, Illinois. I was returning home that evening
408 with our 11-year-old daughter, and she looked to the sky to
409 the south and she saw a glow. The -- a few minutes earlier,
410 before that, a train, a Canadian national train going through
411 a suburb in southern Rockford had derailed. It was a train
412 carrying two million gallons of ethanol at the time.
413 Nineteen of the cars derailed, some of those cars leaked, and
414 there was a fire that resulted quickly after that. That fire
415 ensnared the cars at a crossing that was right by that, and
416 quickly, people were injured. And unfortunately, that day a
417 life was lost.

418 Within minutes of that derailment, our radio stations
419 started broadcasting news of it to the community, and telling
420 people what they needed to do. We worked closely with local
421 officials to coordinate a response and direct people to
422 safety. It was our AM radio station that night, WNTA in
423 Rockford, Illinois, that got people to safety and explained
424 what they needed to do that evening. As bad as it was, if it
425 was not for the emergency management officials that night
426 working with everybody throughout that area, it would have

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427 been much more tragic.

428 I can tell you that AM radio that evening played a very
429 important role in doing something that a cell phone
430 delivering a text message cannot do at that time. AM radio
431 explains, gives fabric and understanding to an emergency
432 situation.

433 The AM radio stations also play a central role in our
434 Emergency Alert System. The vast majority of the AM radio
435 station or the PEP stations, which are the primary entry
436 point which fires at the beginning of a presidential alert,
437 are AM radio stations. These stations have been selected
438 because many of them have a coverage area of some 700 miles.
439 AM radio stations also penetrate solid objects like
440 mountains. FEMA has invested millions to make these stations
441 withstand natural disasters and acts of terrorism. But the
442 stations themselves are responsible in those moments for
443 operating in times of crisis.

444 A car is often times the only source of power and news
445 during an emergency. People depend on that. Unlike the
446 Internet and cell phones, which often times go down in a
447 moment of crisis, the AM radio stations and radio in general

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448 stays up during that. Despite AM's critical role, some of
449 the automakers have removed it from electric vehicles, and
450 there are also discussions to remove it from internal
451 combustion cars.

452 Broadcasters want to thank Chairman Latta and
453 Representative Greg Pence and multiple members of this
454 subcommittee for sending a letter to the automakers signaling
455 the importance.

456 Local broadcasters were also pleased as a result of this
457 letter that Ford announced a decision to reverse its course.
458 We applaud that decision.

459 A bipartisan bill has also been introduced and, like
460 other safety requirements, the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act
461 would preserve AM radio in cars by requiring the
462 Transportation Secretary to issue a rule under which motor
463 vehicles would be required to include a device that can
464 receive AM. Broadcasters, of course, support this
465 legislation.

466 In conclusion, this is not a zero sum game. We can
467 protect Americans the way we always have with the dependable
468 system of EAS that works in times of emergency. We also can

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469 protect the interference to electronics and the occupants of
470 cars, as automakers have done for many years. This moment
471 right now is too important not to take this action.

472 Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today, and
473 I look forward to your questions.

474 [The prepared statement of Mr. Chapman follows:]

475

476 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

477

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478 *Mr. Latta. Well, thank you, Mr. Chapman.

479 Mr. Schmidt, you are now recognized for five minutes.

480

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481 STATEMENT OF SCOTT SCHMIDT

482

483 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you. Chairman Latta, Ranking
484 Member Matsui, Chair McMorris Rodgers, and Ranking Member
485 Pallone, and distinguished members of the committee, on
486 behalf of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation and our
487 members, I thank you for the opportunity to appear at this
488 hearing today to share our perspectives on AM radios in motor
489 vehicles, and consumer access to emergency alerts.

490 Alliance for Automotive Innovation was formed in 2020,
491 and represents the full auto industry, a sector supporting 10
492 million American jobs and 5 percent of the economy. As the
493 leading voice of the auto industry, auto innovators
494 appreciate the continued engagement with your offices
495 regarding consumer safety and the importance of consumer
496 access to emergency alerts in motor vehicles.

497 Our mission is to deliver a cleaner, safer, and smarter
498 automotive future, and we take the safety of consumers and
499 public seriously. We remain committed to ensuring drivers
500 have access to free public alerts and safety warnings through
501 the federal emergency management agency system known as the

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502 Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, IPAWS.

503 Access to emergency alerts under IPAWS is not limited to
504 just one mode of communication. IPAWS was created to provide
505 integrated services and capabilities to Federal, state,
506 territorial, tribal, and local authorities, and enable
507 effective alerts to all communities. IPAWS's mission
508 contemplates multiple methods, including mobile phones via
509 wireless emergency alerts; radio in terms of analog, digital,
510 and satellite; and television via the Emergency Alert System
511 and on the NOAA's weather radio.

512 The system was designed to provide redundant alert
513 mechanisms, assuring the public has access to multiple
514 outlets to receive these critical alerts. The intent is for
515 the public to not have to rely on a single source to receive
516 the alerts. Rather, the goal is to create a safety net of
517 information sources. The more the better.

518 Importantly, while access to emergency alerts is not
519 limited to vehicles, drivers today are able to take advantage
520 of the IPAWS safety network. Regardless of whether these
521 vehicles are equipped with a factory-installed AM radio,
522 vehicles can receive alerts through AM digital or hi-def

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523 radio, FM, both analog and digital, and satellite radio.
524 Mobile wireless emergency alerts are also available in
525 vehicles through connectivity to smartphones.

526 Simply put, vehicles today offer a host of options for
527 consumers to receive critical emergency alerts. Consumer
528 trends show that 90 percent of today's cars come with
529 factory-installed systems like Apple CarPlay, Android Auto,
530 and satellite radio.

531 With technology and new methods of reaching the public,
532 Congress and Federal agencies have taken actions to modernize
533 the national alert system to ensure that these systems can
534 adapt to shifting consumer preferences and include emerging
535 technologies. Congress has already directed FEMA to
536 modernize and future-proof the system, including emerging
537 technologies.

538 What is more, the FCC has noted challenges with analog
539 radio's steady decline in listenership and reception issues.

540 Finally, the IPAWS Program Management Office Strategic
541 Plan emphasizes the challenges for the system as the public
542 moves from radio and television as their primary mode of
543 news.

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544 Technology advancements in the way the public consumes
545 information is consistently evolving, and IPAWS has made its
546 goal to find ways to communicate with the program and public
547 however and wherever they receive the information.

548 There are many reasons why automakers make decisions in
549 vehicle design and features, even when there is no mandate to
550 include it, which is in the case -- this is the case with AM
551 radios. At the end of the day, automakers consider a variety
552 of factors when designing and constructing cars, including
553 prioritizing safety, efficiency, and addressing consumer
554 preferences.

555 The auto industry is pro-innovation. We are committed
556 to ensuring drivers have access to free public alerts and
557 safety warnings through IPAWS. Both the Federal Government
558 and the automotive industry recognize that the ways in which
559 consumers receive information will change over time.

560 As innovation in the auto industry continues and new
561 innovations are developed, the Federal Government and
562 industry must work together to modernize IPAWS and continue
563 to incorporate new technologies. Doing so will ensure we
564 collectively provide the best, most capable, and resilient

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565 technologies to the public, while also strengthening public
566 safety.

567 On behalf of auto innovators and our member companies, I
568 look forward to working with Congress and the Administration
569 to foster a landscape that serves the interests and safety of
570 all Americans. Thank you.

571 [The prepared statement of Mr. Schmidt follows:]

572

573 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

574

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575 *Mr. Latta. Well, thank you, Mr. Schmidt.

576 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, you are recognized for five

577 minutes for your opening statement.

578

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579 STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER M. DEMAISE

580

581 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Good morning, Chairman
582 Latta and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. On
583 behalf of Colonel Patrick J. Callahan of the New Jersey State
584 Police, who also serves as the state director of emergency
585 management, I thank you for the opportunity to testify here
586 today about this important issue, and to deliver some opening
587 remarks.

588 I am Lieutenant Colonel Christopher DeMaise, commander
589 of the homeland security branch of the New Jersey State
590 Police. I also serve as the deputy state director of
591 emergency management, and have oversight of the New Jersey
592 Office of Emergency Management.

593 I am accompanied today by Mitchell Stetson, who is a
594 member of NJOEM's communications bureau, and subject matter
595 expert in emergency alerts and warning. I may be drawing
596 upon his knowledge to answer some of your questions this
597 morning.

598 As set forth in the following testimony, NJOEM strongly
599 supports the proposed AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act. The

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600 lifesaving value of AM radio clearly outweighs the
601 incremental costs to improve AM reception in electric
602 vehicles. NJOEM stands with our partners at the National
603 Emergency Management Association, NEMA, in voicing our clear
604 support for this bill.

605 During the last few years, an uptick in severe weather
606 events and forest fires has been concerning, not just in New
607 Jersey, but across the country. At the same time we have
608 been seeing an increase in cyber crimes, active shooter
609 incidents, and terrorist threats. In the face of this
610 increasing threat scenario, alert and warning is the best
611 tool we have to ensure the safety of our residents and to
612 provide critical information before, during, and after
613 disaster. This can include information needed while
614 individuals are driving during a large-scale evacuation or
615 during a power outage, when individuals sit in their car to
616 listen to a central communications.

617 AM radio is a primary component of the nation's
618 Emergency Alert System. The emergency management community
619 at all levels, in tandem with the private sector and
620 broadcasting companies, has collectively devoted countless

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621 funds and personnel hours to ensure all members of the public
622 can receive critical public safety information in a timely
623 fashion. AM radio is embedded into the alert and warning and
624 public information protocols that we have. NJOEM and our
625 colleagues across the nation have developed and continue to
626 develop plans that rely in part on continued access to AM
627 radio.

628 New Jersey is a very diverse state, with rural farming
629 communities, beach towns, and major urban areas. The
630 extensive reach of AM radio's signals and its high user
631 acceptance ensure delivery to the widest audience possible.

632 As a free resource, AM radio provides essential
633 connectivity for many vulnerable members of underserved
634 populations who may not have the financial or other means to
635 access Internet-based or wireless communications. Public
636 sources report that one-third of AM radio users are aged 65
637 and older, the same age group that may be less likely to
638 demonstrate proficiency with other forms of Internet and
639 smartphone applications.

640 In some cases, AM radio stations may serve specific
641 cultural and ethnic groups. The emergency management

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642 community is under a mandate to reassess and ensure that
643 services are being provided to these traditionally
644 underserved communities, and this is not the time to restrict
645 access to AM radio in vehicles.

646 In addition to serving as a primary communication mode,
647 AM radio fills the need for redundancy as a backup for other
648 primary communication methods when there is a failure of
649 technology, or an underlying power or Internet outage caused
650 by severe weather event or human caused condition. This
651 requirement for redundancy is a basic tenet of emergency
652 management, and has well served this nation for decades. We
653 are reminded of this with every hurricane, every tornado, and
654 every snowstorm.

655 Our belief is that AM radio is a critical source of
656 information to our citizens during a crisis. We are
657 investing in new technology to communicate emergency
658 messaging in a variety of languages to our radio users, and
659 AM radio services have the ability to deliver these messages
660 to wherever people are: at home, in the car. When disaster
661 strikes, no one should lose access to this essential
662 information because the vehicle being driven does not have AM

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663 radio.

664 Thank you for your time, and I look forward to questions
665 today.

666 [The prepared statement of Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise
667 follows:]

668

669 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

670

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671 *Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much for your
672 testimony today, and that will conclude our testimony from
673 our witnesses this morning. And I will begin the questioning
674 this morning, and recognize myself for five minutes.

675 One of my concerns is how little notice has been given
676 to consumers about the removal of AM radios in vehicles.
677 Some companies claim to have announced the phase-out of AM
678 radios, but we have also heard reports that consumers are not
679 aware that their new car doesn't have AM radio until after
680 they have left the auto lot. In fact, a dealership in my
681 district even told me that they had no idea about the change.

682 And I am -- I also want to say thanks to Ford for its
683 change, saying that AM radio will be put back in their
684 vehicles, and also being able to be downloaded in vehicles
685 that are already off the line or have been sold to consumers.

686 Mr. Schmidt, should vehicle manufacturers be responsible
687 to alert consumers when AM radio, a critical safety function
688 of the vehicle, is not included in a model before it is
689 purchased?

690 *Mr. Schmidt. Can you repeat that a little louder? I
691 did have a hard time --

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692 *Mr. Latta. Right. Should vehicle manufacturers be
693 responsible to alert consumers when AM radio, a critical
694 safety function in the vehicle, is not included in that model
695 before it is purchased?

696 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes. I mean, unfortunately, I cannot
697 comment on individual -- what manufacturers can do, but I can
698 certainly reinforce the fact that our members view that there
699 are more options for delivering content and alerts now in
700 vehicles than there ever were, and that we are committed to
701 providing these alerts free of charge to our customers
702 through those vehicles.

703 *Mr. Latta. Thank you.

704 Mr. Chapman, how do you think the removal of AM radios
705 from your car -- from cars will lessen the reach and local
706 impact of your broadcast channel?

707 *Mr. Chapman. Chairman Latta, thank you for that
708 question. It will absolutely impact our reach in a
709 significant way.

710 Most of the radio listening is done in the car. This is
711 a business concern for many of our businesses in, say,
712 Delphos. We have people that were the primary source of

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713 advertising for them, so they come to us to move their
714 products. So there is, obviously, a business reason for us,
715 but there is a business reason for the community.

716 And in addition to that, if AM radio is not in cars, it
717 is the primary point that begins the alert system, so it is a
718 safety issue, too. People won't be able to hear the alerts
719 the way the EAS system is set up.

720 *Mr. Latta. I know it is a little bit early for me for
721 everything to be noticed out there with the change, but have
722 you noticed a change in listenership right now in your
723 station or stations?

724 *Mr. Chapman. So Chairman Latta, at this point it is
725 very early in the process. We have not seen changes, but I
726 can tell you it will be significant because the radio is the
727 primary entry point for people listening to it, and that is
728 where people consume most of the radio. And so if it is not
729 in the car, it would be a significant issue for people
730 hearing alerts or hearing news from local businesses.

731 *Mr. Latta. Well, let me follow up. We hear from many
732 auto manufacturers about how streaming AM radio is the
733 future, and there will no longer be a need for an analog or

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734 HD AM radio. What are your thoughts on that
735 characterization?

736 *Mr. Chapman. So for example, all of the Woof Boom
737 stations stream. But I can also tell you that streaming is
738 part of our future, but it is not all of our future. As
739 consumers listen to the stream, they might be hearing in an
740 area that is far off. And so if they are hearing that
741 stream, they are not getting EAS alerts for the area that are
742 important that is the area of where they are actually
743 residing at the time.

744 And so one of our concerns, if it is only streaming, we
745 are still running outside of the structure of the EAS system.
746 EAS works with AM radio because AM radio can work in times
747 where the power has gone away. AM radio can work in times of
748 disaster, whether there are hurricanes or tornadoes. And if
749 a station is streaming, it is delivered over the Internet and
750 -- which is dependent on the power grid, and also other
751 factors when cell networks go down. This is all part of
752 streaming. So it is not a substitute for what we have, which
753 is our primary delivery system.

754 *Mr. Latta. Well, thank you.

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755 Lieutenant Colonel, let me ask in my last 25 seconds
756 here, when you do your planning -- because years ago, when I
757 was a county commissioner, with our emergency management we
758 always had planning sessions -- do you plan for, if the
759 Internet goes down, what happens then in your communications?

760 I am sorry, you have about 12 seconds left.

761 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Absolutely, sir. We have
762 to plan for every contingency, because Murphy's Law is
763 governing much of our business. And failure of those
764 networks is anticipated.

765 *Mr. Latta. All right. Well, I appreciate that, and I
766 thank our witnesses.

767 And my time has expired, and the chair now recognizes
768 the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentlelady from
769 California, for five minutes.

770 *Ms. Matsui. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

771 I think about the AM radio, and it is something that
772 most of us have grown up with. And there are a lot of things
773 that we take for granted in this country, and probably AM
774 radio is one of them. And not only do we think about it in
775 listening to radios and cars and things like that, but the

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776 fact of the matter today is that, as we look at
777 communications, it has become a very vital part of what we
778 do, and for emergency purposes.

779 In rural areas like parts of my district, cell service
780 can be spotty and simply non-existent. In these areas,
781 alternative methods of communications help ensure that all
782 residents have access to information when and where they need
783 it. And I must say not only in rural areas too, but in urban
784 areas of which I have a great part of also.

785 What I was thinking about is that -- can you describe,
786 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, the limitations of the other
787 Emergency Alert Systems when cell service or power goes down?
788 And I think we can imagine it, but how that would happen.

789 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
790 question, ma'am. Certainly.

791 During these weather events that we have experienced in
792 New Jersey and nationally with high winds, destructive forces
793 such as earthquakes, and other just -- snow load and heavy
794 rains, we have lost cellular communications pretty
795 frequently. And unfortunately, we have become so devoted to
796 them that we kind of lose sight of the fact that we do need

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797 to rely on other mechanisms to communicate with the public.

798 So as mentioned in Chairman Latta's question, I wasn't
799 able to quite, you know, maybe expand upon we require that
800 redundancy to make sure that we can communicate with all of
801 the community. And the AM radio platform certainly has such
802 a broad reach and is reliable and robust that we have
803 leveraged that many, many times to communicate with a broad
804 spectrum of people in both those rural areas and in the urban
805 areas throughout the state.

806 *Ms. Matsui. Right, absolutely. The frequency used by
807 AM radio is different than FM or those used to power our
808 phones. While they have some limitations, they also have
809 strengths that have helped AM radio reach consumers across
810 the country.

811 Mr. Chapman, can you describe the unique characteristics
812 of AM radio frequencies, and why they are so well suited to
813 emergency announcements?

814 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you, Congresswoman. The AM band is
815 somewhat different than, for example, the FM band. AM waves
816 are much longer. The FM waves are much shorter. And in
817 layman's terms what this means is they can travel greater

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818 distances, they can also penetrate things like hills,
819 mountains, and such.

820 And so many years ago, when FEMA and broadcasters
821 decided what do we want as the primary point to activate the
822 Emergency Alert System, they selected AM stations for this
823 very reason. So the entry point to begin a national alert is
824 primarily AM stations and, for example, the one that is in my
825 area that reaches all of the Midwest is WLW, and it covers
826 some 17 states. And this is the reason AM is so central to
827 the EAS.

828 *Ms. Matsui. All right, thank you very much. I am
829 trying -- local economy, whether on TV or radio, local
830 broadcasters provide opportunities for smaller businesses to
831 reach consumers in their community, especially in smaller
832 media markets. This can be an engine for economic growth.

833 Mr. Chapman, can you talk about the opportunities AM
834 radio provides for smaller, local businesses?

835 How would those opportunities be limited if AM radio
836 were removed from all vehicles?

837 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you for the question,
838 Congresswoman.

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839 Once again, it is a question of access. And so I
840 mentioned a radio station that we have in Anderson, Indiana.
841 During the middle of COVID, we went on the air and, you know,
842 in the old days of doing a radiothon we started selling
843 cards, gift cards to businesses to put the money back into
844 the community. So that is central, how it is the economic
845 engine a lot of times. And that is an easy example to
846 understand.

847 One that is also important is there is diverse listening
848 that was mentioned somewhat earlier. I was fortunate a
849 number of years ago to be a general sales manager for a Black
850 gospel station in Indianapolis, and that radio station was
851 central to that community, not only the businesses, but the
852 information that was communicated to the people that listened
853 to that radio station. So it was important as they saw the
854 information that came through the radio at that time as
855 credible and reliable. And that is an important relationship
856 that exists between a radio station and its listener base.

857 *Ms. Matsui. Okay, thank you very much.

858 And I yield back.

859 *Mr. Latta. I thank the gentlelady. She yields back,

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860 and the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida for
861 five minutes.

862 *Mr. Bilirakis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a
863 very important hearing. I appreciate you holding this. And
864 also, I want to thank the ranking member. And thanks for the
865 testimony, as well, from the panel.

866 As we kick off hurricane season this month, I am
867 reminded of the all-too-familiar situation for residents in
868 my state of Florida. The electric is out, the Internet is
869 down, the cell phone coverage is shoddy at best. And if
870 people heard my PSAs over the years, they would know to have
871 an emergency handheld radio at the ready. But if not, they
872 head to their cars to reestablish a connection to their
873 community, hear about the devastation of the storm, and heed
874 any direction from emergency service authorities.

875 So my question, the first question, is to Lieutenant
876 Colonel, to the lieutenant colonel: What benefits do AM
877 signals have over FM signals during and in the aftermath of a
878 natural disaster such as a hurricane?

879 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. AM signals, in and of
880 themselves, have much broader reach, as mentioned before in

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881 prior testimony here today, that they can reach greater
882 distances than the FM signals can. So we can penetrate some
883 of those more rural areas. But also, as mentioned, the
884 ability to also penetrate, you know, buildings within some of
885 those urban centers is -- makes it certainly a little bit
886 more amenable to those types of messaging.

887 *Mr. Bilirakis. Very good, thank you. In 2016
888 legislation I authored to modernize the FEMA's IPAWS system
889 became law. That legislation improved the effectiveness of
890 the texting system for future emergency situations, and
891 implemented training requirements for state officials. It
892 also relied heavily on the emergency alarm system and AM
893 radio signals to work quickly and effectively.

894 So again, Lieutenant Colonel, in your professional
895 capacity, do you foresee potential delays to emergency
896 information getting to citizens as a result of lesser access
897 to AM radios?

898 And is it possible to replicate our EAS system without
899 the use of AM signals?

900 And this is so very important, as you know. I mean, we
901 could lose lives without the AM radio. So please, if you

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902 could respond to that, I would appreciate it very much.

903 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you, Congressman.

904 Yes, so I would agree that to lose the access to AM radio
905 signals certainly would impede the messaging getting out,
906 whether it is a cellular network collapse, a power outage
907 that impacts the cellular infrastructure, the potential is
908 that those messages in text form would be cached and not
909 delivered directly to the people that might need them.

910 Certainly, we need all platforms available to our
911 residents because, you know, some people are more comfortable
912 listening to AM radio stations to obtain their information,
913 and we want to have all messaging platforms available. So
914 any delays in getting that message out in that critical
915 moment certainly could be a matter of life and death as a
916 part of the Emergency Alert System.

917 *Mr. Bilirakis. Absolutely. And then getting into the
918 entertainment aspect, people are used to -- particularly in
919 the rural areas, and I represent rural areas, not all of my
920 district, but quite a bit, two counties, and they are used to
921 -- the people are used to listening to AM radio. That is
922 where they get their news.

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923 And I tell you what, if we don't save AM radio, Mr.
924 Chairman, I will tell you what, it would be very devastating
925 for a lot of people, particularly our seniors. And I will
926 add that I love to listen to AM radio, listen to baseball
927 games. And it -- radio is -- actually, baseball is a radio
928 sport if you can't go to the game. So that is from a selfish
929 point of view. But in any case, this is a serious issue, and
930 I really appreciate you having this hearing. I will yield
931 back the balance of my time.

932 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

933 But I think your team is doing better than it did last
934 year.

935 *Mr. Bilirakis. My team is doing pretty well.

936 [Laughter.]

937 *Mr. Bilirakis. Two first-place teams, the Rays and the
938 Pirates.

939 *Mr. Latta. Well, there we go. Thank you very much.
940 The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from California's
941 16th district for five minutes.

942 *Ms. Eshoo. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to
943 the ranking member for holding this hearing today. Thank you

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944 to the witnesses.

945 There is no question that many Americans value AM radio,
946 which is why it has been a standard feature in cars for so
947 many years. While drivers now have several options for
948 listening to music, podcasts, and other entertainment while
949 driving, the backlash to Ford removing AM radio, which they
950 have now walked back, shows there is still a really robust
951 consumer demand for this feature.

952 Just as importantly, I think this episode shows that
953 automakers are responsive to the demand. That is how the
954 free market is supposed to work. While there are many
955 features that drivers may want in their cars, the only ones
956 mandated by the Federal Government are those intended to keep
957 us safe.

958 Two of the witnesses today have endorsed legislation
959 mandating AM radio as a safety feature to ensure the public
960 can receive emergency alerts during natural disasters and
961 other emergencies. NHTSA has more than a dozen outstanding
962 safety regulations mandated by Congress that it has yet to
963 implement, and some of them have been pending for more than a
964 decade. I think the Energy and Commerce Committee needs to

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965 get after NHTSA. Before we add to that list, I think we need
966 to be sure that any additional mandates are truly needed to
967 improve safety and save lives on the road.

968 To Colonel DeMaise, is AM radio the only means for -- or
969 primary means by which drivers can receive emergency alerts
970 through the integrated public alerts and warning system?

971 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
972 question, Congresswoman.

973 They can receive messaging through the FM system, as
974 well. And also, if they have a cellular device available to
975 them, certainly they can receive messaging through that
976 platform, as well.

977 *Ms. Eshoo. Thank you.

978 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Through the wireless
979 Emergency Alert System.

980 *Ms. Eshoo. Thank you.

981 To Mr. Schmidt, what are the potential unintended
982 consequences of Congress mandating the use of a specific
983 technology to receive emergency alerts?

984 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for the question. Yes. As you
985 are well aware, mandates and regulations are blunt

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986 instruments, and so it is important that we look at the cost
987 and benefit over a future. And one of the things that FEMA
988 has noted is that there is declining listenership. And part
989 of the whole IPAWS system is looking at the future in terms
990 of what new technologies are going to be able to supplement
991 -- maybe AM, potentially, in the future, even replace AM --
992 and also to deliver more effective alerts.

993 So we are very technology agnostic in the sense that we
994 are looking for delivering the alerts to our members, our
995 customers as efficiently as possible, as broadly as possible,
996 in the most efficient manner, and in a manner that is not
997 going to decline in the future, and will provide the benefits
998 well into the future. Thank you.

999 *Ms. Eshoo. Is there a -- this is to any of the
1000 witnesses -- is there a technology-neutral approach Congress
1001 can take to ensure that all drivers have access to emergency
1002 alerts?

1003 Yes.

1004 *Mr. Chapman. If -- Congresswoman, if I may answer
1005 that --

1006 *Ms. Eshoo. Sure.

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1007 *Mr. Chapman. -- for a second, FEMA, many years ago, as
1008 they were constructing the current model for the EAS plan,
1009 used AM radio stations as -- and I referenced this earlier --
1010 as the primary entry point. And they did that for a couple
1011 of reasons.

1012 Number one, we have already talked about the distances
1013 that AM radio stations travel, but it is also some of the
1014 characteristics. So in the event of a significant disaster
1015 that we haven't experienced, these stations reach more than
1016 90 percent of the United States. So they are the central
1017 point. And so there is not another technology or another
1018 medium right now that is ready to step in and replace that.

1019 *Ms. Eshoo. Any other witness care to --

1020 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Congresswoman, I agree
1021 with his statement. It really is, as was mentioned by
1022 several witnesses today, stating that it is the backbone of
1023 the Emergency Alert System. It is the most consistent,
1024 dependable platform with which we have to communicate with
1025 the public.

1026 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes, I just -- kind of just make a
1027 mention that, you know, the -- my understanding from reading

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1028 some of the FEMA documents is that the EAS system is a fairly
1029 cost-intensive system to maintain. And I think the key thing
1030 is how do we make that more cost effective as we move
1031 forward. And as we look at technologies that may be
1032 declining, we need to find alternatives that can address that
1033 in a more cost-efficient manner, and still deliver the safety
1034 benefits.

1035 *Ms. Eshoo. Why is it so expensive?

1036 *Mr. Schmidt. I don't know. I just noted in their --
1037 well, first off, I think the idea is that you have these
1038 hardened stations. And like I said, they are not just AM
1039 stations, they are other stations. And I don't have the
1040 specifics on that, but it is in the -- in their documents.
1041 And if you want, I can probably pull that reference and get
1042 it back to you, if that would be helpful.

1043 *Ms. Eshoo. I would appreciate that.

1044 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you.

1045 *Ms. Eshoo. Thank you to the witnesses.

1046 Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

1047 *Mr. Latta. The gentlelady's time has expired and
1048 yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentlelady of the

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1049 full committee for five minutes.

1050 *The Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1051 In the announcement -- Mr. Schmidt, in the announcement
1052 Ford made on May 23rd, they stated, "For any owners of 2023
1053 Ford EVs currently without AM broadcast capability, we will
1054 offer an over-the-air software update to make it available."

1055 How was Ford able to turn on AM broadcast capability
1056 with the flip of a switch, while other car manufacturers are
1057 not?

1058 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for the question. Let me give
1059 you Ford's -- what they have told us, and I think they
1060 mentioned this to the committee, as well. Because in their
1061 May 23rd announcement, CEO Jim Farley announced that after
1062 speaking with policy leaders about the importance of AM
1063 broadcast radio as a part of the Emergency Alert System, Ford
1064 decided to include it on all 2024 Ford and Lincoln vehicles.
1065 And for any owners of 2023 model year Ford EVs that did not
1066 initially offer AM radio, they will offer a software update.

1067 It is my understanding from discussions with Ford
1068 representatives that Ford started removing AM radio by
1069 disabling the software while they worked to -- on a longer

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1070 lead time modification that would actually remove the
1071 hardware. So for those models, Ford can enable the AM radio
1072 by -- via the over-the-air update.

1073 However, I can't really speak to any of the -- Ford's
1074 plans for post-2024 at this point.

1075 *The Chair. Are you aware of any other auto
1076 manufacturers who are choosing not to provide AM radio,
1077 despite having the technology and the capability to do so?

1078 *Mr. Schmidt. I haven't -- we haven't done a census to
1079 see which vehicle manufacturers are or are not. This has
1080 been something that manufacturers look at customer
1081 preferences very closely, and so they do a lot of market
1082 research and try to determine what -- how to deliver the most
1083 value to their customers.

1084 *The Chair. Okay, thank you. Do you have -- do you --
1085 do any of the companies in your group plan to charge extra
1086 for AM/FM radios and cars through a subscription service?

1087 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes, I really can't talk about, you know,
1088 content. I can talk about the safety.

1089 And so we are committed to providing free alerts. As
1090 far as the content, as you know, in any -- in this realm

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1091 there is a lot of free content, a lot of subscription content
1092 for everything. So again, that is a consumer preference, a
1093 marketing thing that our manufacturers look at.

1094 But I can say that -- reaffirm that we are committed to
1095 ensuring drivers have access to free public alerts and safety
1096 warnings through the IPAWS system. Thank you.

1097 *The Chair. Okay, thank you.

1098 Mr. Chapman, a large portion of the most popular AM
1099 radio shows feature either conservative or religious content.
1100 From your perspective, what effect will the removal of AM
1101 radios from cars have on the diversity of thought in the
1102 broadcasting space?

1103 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you for that question,
1104 Congresswoman. I will pull on a couple of examples.

1105 I have a station in Muncie, Indiana. It is WMUN. We
1106 recently re-programed this station. It is somewhat cost-
1107 intensive, but we focus on local community issues. It is
1108 important that we have a place for the fourth estate to act,
1109 to talk about public issues.

1110 Like a lot of the communities in the Rust Belt, this
1111 town has been somewhat challenged over the years. But if

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1112 there is not the place with the declining forms of other
1113 media to discuss these things, we can't depend on social
1114 media to help a community shape its decision. So it is a
1115 role that we need to play, as a broadcaster, and that is
1116 something that AM stations do really well.

1117 I had referenced a little bit earlier that when I was a
1118 general sales manager of an urban-formatted station in
1119 Indianapolis, we worked very hard to address issues that were
1120 specific to our station and our audience. I have got a good
1121 friend who operates a radio station, he is a member of NABOB
1122 in Evansville, Indiana, Ed Lander WEOA, and his station puts
1123 information out that would not be received by his listeners
1124 in that community because there are not other sources for it.

1125 So the diversity of voice and the diversity of thought
1126 is very important, and the AM band does that better than any
1127 of our other vehicles.

1128 *The Chair. Thank you for those insights. Another
1129 question. The U.S. has invested significant capital into
1130 hardening certain AM radio broadcast stations to prepare for
1131 a variety of crisis scenarios. Can you speak to what goes
1132 into the process of hardening an AM station?

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1133 *Mr. Chapman. So as a -- thank you again for the
1134 question. As a general rule, each station, each opportunity
1135 for FEMA and that broadcaster is unique.

1136 For example, if it is a station that is on the Gulf, it
1137 might be on stilts and up in the air if a hurricane comes
1138 through. That is to protect it, because in the past, when
1139 that has happened -- for example, during Katrina -- stations
1140 were not able to stay on. So that investment has been made.

1141 Generally, with any PEP station -- which is, again, the
1142 primary entry point -- 30 to 60 days of alternate power are
1143 at each one of those facilities. So it is very different
1144 than might -- a station in the Midwest that might be set up
1145 to survive some type of a terrorist act, such as an EMP or
1146 something like that. That is a lead-encased facility. So it
1147 depends on the radio station.

1148 And I know that is not a direct answer, but each one of
1149 these stations is somewhat different in terms of its
1150 requirements.

1151 *The Chair. Okay. Thank you.

1152 Thank you, everyone. I yield back.

1153 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back, and

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1154 the chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, the
1155 ranking member of the full committee, for five minutes.

1156 *Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Chairman.

1157 In times of emergency, with the stakes so high, we can't
1158 ignore the fact that reducing the number of platforms and
1159 technologies available to us for warning the public makes the
1160 job of emergency managers and first responders that much more
1161 difficult. So let me ask Colonel DeMaise.

1162 Why is AM radio a critical piece of the public warning
1163 system in New Jersey?

1164 And why is it shortsighted to reduce the number of
1165 options available to public officials for communicating with
1166 the public in future disasters?

1167 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you, Congressman.
1168 The redundancy, as a major tenant of emergency management, is
1169 something, you know, we try to focus in on. We need to have
1170 multiple platforms available to us, whether it is power
1171 delivery, we have generators or other sources of energy for
1172 homes, water being bottled water -- water, buffaloes, et
1173 cetera -- and from a communication standpoint, we want the
1174 maximum amount of platforms available that meets the users

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1175 where they are at.

1176 The AM radio platform is, again, highly accepted by its
1177 audience and trusted for that matter, and we want to
1178 communicate with those individuals through that platform if
1179 they are not maybe paying attention to those cellular
1180 platforms -- television, et cetera. So we lose that
1181 connectivity with that very large audience during a crisis.

1182 *Mr. Pallone. Thank you. Thank you for being here.
1183 Let me go to Mr. Schmidt.

1184 I was glad to see you emphasized your member companies'
1185 commitment to ensuring drivers' access to free public alerts
1186 and safety warnings. I did not, however, hear a commitment
1187 to ensuring access to free information and entertainment like
1188 that currently enjoyed from broadcast radio. And while I
1189 appreciate those who point out that most radio stations are
1190 available to stream via apps on our phones or through the
1191 vehicles, these suggestions ignore a simple reality that not
1192 everyone has or can afford unlimited cellular data plans to
1193 support that level of sustained usage or additional
1194 subscriptions for their cars. So we don't want this to be
1195 another issue exacerbated by the digital divide.

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1196 So my question, Mr. Schmidt, is how will people without
1197 unlimited data plans or paid auto connectivity subscriptions
1198 access broadcast radio content without the standard antenna
1199 in the vehicle?

1200 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for your question. Again, as I
1201 reiterate, consumers have never had so many choices in where
1202 they get their content and information, including alerts.

1203 I can't comment on necessarily what would be
1204 subscription or not subscription. However, I will say that
1205 we -- our commitment is that there will be free options in
1206 that vehicle. And even within things that do have
1207 subscriptions such as satellite, their alerts are free on
1208 their base channels, so they are provided without fee, even
1209 if you don't choose to subscribe. Thank you.

1210 *Mr. Pallone. I mean, the problem, though, you know, is
1211 that we know that with AM, I mean, it is essentially free.
1212 We don't know how people who have limited means are going to
1213 be able to use some of these other things that might have a
1214 subscription or, you know, limit -- they might have -- they
1215 may not have unlimited cellular data plans. So I understand
1216 what you are saying, but I also think that we have, in the

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1217 case of broadcast radio and AM station, we know that that is
1218 not something they have to pay for.

1219 Let me go to Mr. Chapman.

1220 Can you describe what would happen if your business had
1221 to rely primarily on streaming broadcasts?

1222 How about the hardship streaming would place on working
1223 people, who regularly tune in to your stations while
1224 commuting to and from their jobs?

1225 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you, Congressman, for the question.
1226 A number of our listeners would no longer hear our stations.
1227 The easiest way to consume our product is free, over-the-air
1228 radio. A streaming option is something that all of our
1229 stations have, but it is not that way for all broadcasters.
1230 There is a cost that goes with streaming. So for smaller
1231 broadcasters, for smaller operators, a stand-alone radio
1232 station, they may not have that option.

1233 So it would be a significant hit for our business, it
1234 would lower our reach -- and we are talking about safety here
1235 -- we are not as going to be accessible [sic]. But for some
1236 broadcasters, it would end their business model.

1237 *Mr. Pallone. All right, thank you very much. Thank

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1238 you all.

1239 And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

1240 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back, and
1241 the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Michigan for five
1242 minutes.

1243 *Mr. Walberg. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1244 Public safety, public benefits beyond safety, two
1245 pillars of what we are hearing about the importance of AM
1246 radio. Top-down mandates are not, I believe, the way to
1247 approach this issue, but it is important that we properly
1248 identify what AM radio means for our constituents and the
1249 impact that its removal from vehicles would have.

1250 I think the fact that AM is free is something that ought
1251 to cause all of us to sit up and take notice.

1252 And thank you to the panel, thank you for dealing with
1253 our concerns, our ideas and questions today.

1254 The free service that AM offers requires no Internet
1255 connection, reaches parts of the country and people that
1256 streaming and other services cannot for various reasons.
1257 This is how people in rural areas like my district get their
1258 news, they connect with their religion, they raise money for

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1259 local causes, they take part in diverse conversations that
1260 they might not otherwise have access to.

1261 Mr. Chapman, over half of all people only listen to
1262 radio in the car. I listen in the shower, as well. We will
1263 leave it there.

1264 Additionally, AM/FM radio is still the top listened-to
1265 media in cars over both streaming and satellite services
1266 combined. Not all auto makers have plans to eliminate AM
1267 receivers -- and thank you to Ford, I think, for listening,
1268 and I hope they will continue to listen to that -- and expand
1269 the whole network of free radio by doing so.

1270 How could the rhetoric around removal impact investment
1271 in and availability of AM radio programs?

1272 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, could you repeat that very
1273 last part of your question, please?

1274 *Mr. Walberg. I was asking how the continued rhetoric
1275 around removal of AM impact investment and availability.

1276 *Mr. Chapman. So, you know, as far as the --
1277 Congressman, thank you for the question -- as far as the view
1278 or the rhetoric, you know, it, obviously, would look, you
1279 know, for anybody wanting to invest in our sector, question

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1280 what is going on.

1281 But I think the bigger question for us is, as an
1282 industry right now, is how do we make sure that we can
1283 connect with people at all times who want to receive us. And
1284 we know that we do the best when we are received over the air
1285 through the channels that are easiest for people to receive
1286 it.

1287 So, you know, we have made a concerted effort to be
1288 available everywhere for people so they can consume our
1289 product. But the vast majority of listening that occurs to
1290 radio stations is where it is broadcast free and over the
1291 air.

1292 *Mr. Walberg. Yes, and that is an investment option
1293 that ought to be trumpeted.

1294 Mr. Chapman, Michigan has a rich AM history. In fact,
1295 the first commercial radio station in the country started
1296 here -- or started there. I guess I am always living in
1297 Michigan. Our AM stations cover things important to
1298 Michiganders, whether it is a fundraiser for the local
1299 Salvation Army or minute-by-minute updates on flooding in the
1300 state, or now wildfires up in the northern reaches of our

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1301 state. There has been a trend towards media consolidation
1302 for decades, making news less local. That wouldn't work in
1303 Crawford County right now with the fires, if we weren't
1304 local.

1305 What is the AM radio's role in local news and keeping
1306 people in rural areas informed?

1307 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, we have made significant
1308 investments in our news operation. I will touch on those in
1309 a second. We started our company on the premise that
1310 locally-owned and locally-managed radio, where we operate, is
1311 the right way to serve the community. That is our business
1312 model. We know that we need to continue to invest in our
1313 news. We have upped the staff in that. We operate in small
1314 communities, and we also operate in rural areas.

1315 So the news aspect and the information aspect that we
1316 provide to the community is an important part of our service.
1317 That is why many of the people in our organization come to
1318 work every day. They see that as a role to serve the
1319 community.

1320 *Mr. Walberg. Thank you.

1321 Mr. Schmidt, how much does it cost to include an AM

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1322 radio receiver in a newer electric vehicle?

1323 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes, unfortunately, I don't have cost
1324 information that is specific to vehicle manufacturers, and it
1325 also is very specific to the vehicle design. I can say there
1326 is probably a range, because some of the issues with
1327 interference may be more or less prevalent, but I don't have
1328 any specific cost information. Sorry.

1329 *Mr. Walberg. So that leaves us at a loss, as well,
1330 because we don't understand it. So thank you.

1331 I yield back.

1332 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back, and
1333 the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida's 9th
1334 district for five minutes.

1335 *Mr. Soto. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my first couple
1336 of years in the Congress we had Hurricane Irma, which
1337 pummeled central Florida with heavy winds and some rains, and
1338 we saw trees down everywhere. We got hit again with
1339 Hurricane Ian just recently. This time it was more flooding
1340 and standing water for many days.

1341 And we often tell our constituents, as does the state,
1342 that -- and our local governments -- that we need to be

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1343 prepared, have adequate supplies. And one of those key
1344 supplies is a battery-powered radio. It is right there on
1345 our list, on the Federal list, on the state list, because
1346 redundancy is critical, especially for our Emergency Alert
1347 System. Cell phone towers, cable, electricity can all go
1348 down. And AM is the last line of defense when we are talking
1349 about critical information, evacuations, power outages,
1350 downed power lines, curfews, flooding, need of help to clear
1351 the way for our first responders.

1352 And AM is also a key part of our Hispanic culture. Many
1353 of my constituents access Spanish language programming, news,
1354 culture, music through AM radio, and it has only heightened
1355 in our U.S. territories, all of which are islands like Puerto
1356 Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam. When all else fails, AM
1357 seems to be there to pick up the slack during a lot of these
1358 natural disasters.

1359 Obviously, a lot of us were concerned when major auto
1360 manufacturers had started considering phasing out AM radio.
1361 Some have reversed course, like Ford, and we appreciate that.
1362 We encourage others to follow suit.

1363 Mr. Chapman, when all else fails, how essential is AM

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1364 radio during a natural disaster?

1365 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, thank you for the question.
1366 The central point in a large disaster depends on PEP, or
1367 primary entry point stations. The majority of those 75
1368 percent are AM radio stations. And again, it was the design
1369 of the system at that point in time, which they continue to
1370 evolve today, that they made it essential for AM radio
1371 stations because of the things we have already discussed to
1372 be part of that.

1373 In more recent times, when we are dealing with local
1374 alerts, it is only the AM stations that go into great detail.
1375 Two quick examples.

1376 Recently in Alexandria, which is just north of Anderson,
1377 Indiana, twice in one month we had what we believed was an
1378 active shooter in a school. It was only our AM radio station
1379 explaining at length with reporters on site what was actually
1380 happening to keep the public calm -- because it was not what
1381 was being put on social media. In that example, it is a
1382 prime situation of how AM radio serves in a time of need.

1383 Just a few weeks ago in mid-May, in Lima, Ohio, the
1384 prison there had two extremely dangerous felons escape. In

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1385 that moment it was our stations and our AM station that were
1386 providing not just alerts, but we are providing the
1387 background and the information, so businesses and different
1388 organizations could keep their population safe.

1389 *Mr. Soto. Thank you so much.

1390 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, how critical is AM radio
1391 stations for motor vehicles for ability of Spanish-speaking
1392 communities in New Jersey or in my home state of Florida or
1393 others to receive emergency alerts?

1394 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you, Congressman,
1395 for the question.

1396 As mentioned, we like to message out where those
1397 communities are at. And the AM radio stations being able to
1398 share those messages with our people is of critical
1399 importance.

1400 From a motor vehicle standpoint, it is not uncommon, as
1401 in the case of Hurricane Sandy, for us to engage in
1402 evacuations of areas. And having that ability to communicate
1403 with people that are on the move when cellular networks may
1404 have been compromised due to high winds or other destructive
1405 measures, or in the case where there is power outages and

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1406 those systems maybe aren't able to leverage and communicate
1407 properly, the AM platform provides us with a great deal of
1408 connectivity with those in the community that are on the
1409 move.

1410 And in some cases, as we have seen anecdotally, people
1411 sheltering in their cars -- maybe they had to move to higher
1412 ground -- that radio tends to be their situational awareness
1413 of the environment around them, what the conditions are, if
1414 they may be in an area that might not have a good view of
1415 what is happening in the real world.

1416 *Mr. Soto. And, Lieutenant Colonel, whether it is the
1417 Florida Turnpike or the New Jersey Turnpike, how many folks
1418 do you have coming in from out of state who may not be aware
1419 of some of the natural disasters that may be occurring?

1420 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. That is a good question,
1421 Chairperson.

1422 The New Jersey Turnpike sees somewhere over a million, I
1423 think, riders a day, you know, on a good day. So I couldn't
1424 actually answer, you know, that aspect.

1425 But again, having, you know, those alerts in our
1426 signboards, telling people where to go to get critical

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1427 information, we tend to tell people to go to AM radio
1428 stations.

1429 *Mr. Soto. Thanks. My time is expired.

1430 *Mr. Latta. The gentleman's time has expired. The
1431 chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, the vice
1432 chair of the subcommittee, for five minutes.

1433 *Mr. Carter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank each of
1434 you for being here. I appreciate it very much.

1435 As the chairman mentioned, I am from Georgia. I have
1436 the honor and privilege of representing the entire coast of
1437 Georgia. Obviously, hurricanes are a concern to us.
1438 Obviously, the emergency management system is important.

1439 You know, one thing to note also, for those of you who
1440 may not be familiar with Georgia, we always say there are two
1441 Georgias. There is Atlanta and everywhere else. Well, we
1442 are everywhere else in south Georgia, you know, so access to
1443 AM radio is important to us, and very important.

1444 But, you know, natural disasters like hurricanes are
1445 traumatic. And often times there is no other means of
1446 getting alerts other than the AM radio. So I am glad to see
1447 that companies such as Ford are -- have reversed their

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1448 decision to remove AM radio in their EVs based on this
1449 information, and I am hopeful that more will follow suit with
1450 that.

1451 Mr. Schmidt, in my district we have Hyundai that is
1452 building one of their EV plants. In fact, it is the largest
1453 economic development project in the history of the State of
1454 Georgia, a \$5.5 billion investment that is going to create
1455 over 8,100 jobs, plus probably that many more in ancillary
1456 businesses. So we are very excited about it. They have
1457 announced that they have no plans to remove AM radios from
1458 their vehicles, as well. So we are we are encouraged to hear
1459 that.

1460 Can you explain to me why some of the OEMs plan to keep
1461 AM and others don't? I mean, what is the rationale here?

1462 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, first off, I can't really comment
1463 on individual OEM plans, but I will say our manufacturers are
1464 very consumer-focused, and they run focus groups, et cetera,
1465 and they look at their various product portfolios and the
1466 kind of consumers that use their products and what they want.
1467 So I can't say much more than that, other than the fact that
1468 it seems like some of our members are -- see value in it.

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1469 And all of our members, though, see value in providing
1470 the full network of the IPAWS alerts, and we certainly
1471 support that and commit to that.

1472 *Mr. Carter. I keep hearing that interfere with the EV
1473 batteries is a problem, that static and that type of thing --
1474 is that true?

1475 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, I mean, in general, AM has issues
1476 with static and interference. That is something that FEMA
1477 has documented.

1478 But I can't say much in terms of very specifics because,
1479 again, EVs, even within EVs, are different. They have a
1480 number of different motors, different components, different
1481 places where they are placed. So I don't have any particular
1482 specific information about the type of shielding or the type
1483 of recommendations they do, or remediations they do, in terms
1484 of filtering, to be able to pull out some of that static.

1485 *Mr. Carter. You know, I have just got to tell you, I
1486 am a little skeptical of that. I have to believe that, you
1487 know, if they really wanted to they could fix that problem.
1488 I mean, I don't know. Maybe I am wrong.

1489 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, while you serve the great

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1490 State of New Jersey, as I say, can you tell me how my
1491 constituents in Georgia, one, would fare in a category 5
1492 hurricane without AM radio?

1493 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
1494 question, Congressman.

1495 When those survivors don't have a sense of what is
1496 happening around them, it tends to affect adversely their
1497 decision-making processes, whether it is to shelter in place
1498 or maybe to evacuate. And we want to make sure that those
1499 survivors have most critical, up-to-date information
1500 possible.

1501 New Jersey, through the Emergency Management Assistance
1502 Compact, has assisted Georgia in providing generators in the
1503 past to help support power during --

1504 *Mr. Carter. And we appreciate that, and it does not go
1505 unnoted.

1506 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Yes, sir. We definitely
1507 know in a -- how important it is to make sure some of those
1508 critical pieces of infrastructure come back online as swiftly
1509 as possible.

1510 And, you know, part of that process is making sure that,

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1511 you know, you are effectively communicating with your public.
1512 And AM has that ability to transcend some of those other
1513 challenges to the infrastructure.

1514 *Mr. Carter. Mr. Chapman, real quick. You mentioned in
1515 your testimony that AM radio helps those who have poor
1516 wireless and broadband signals stay connected. And, you
1517 know, again, south Georgia, we don't have the best broadband.
1518 We have got some, and it is good, but we don't have the best.
1519 But we got a lot of agriculture. So this would impact those
1520 in our agriculture sector, as well.

1521 What -- while this proves that we have a lot of work to
1522 do -- and particularly on this committee -- to improve
1523 broadband, rural broadband, can you please share the volume
1524 and type of information that these communities receive
1525 through AM radio?

1526 *Mr. Chapman. So thank you for the question,
1527 Congressman.

1528 We have a lot of ag and farm information that we have on
1529 our stations, and a lot of that goes on our AM radio
1530 stations. It is very important because that is how it is
1531 received by those communities.

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1532 And it is also important to point out that those
1533 communities have other ways to receive things, but it is
1534 easiest for them when they are out in a combine, something
1535 like that, to have it on the AM radio. They have other
1536 means, but they still choose, and ag information across radio
1537 is one of the most important ways it is delivered today.

1538 *Mr. Carter. Good, thank you.

1539 And thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

1540 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman's time has
1541 expired, and the chair now recognizes the gentleman from
1542 California's 29th district for five minutes.

1543 *Mr. Cardenas. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and
1544 Ranking Member, for having this important hearing.

1545 For some people, radio -- specifically, AM radio -- is
1546 an outdated medium with a shrinking consumer base. However,
1547 in Latino communities like the one I represent in the San
1548 Fernando Valley, radio is one of the most powerful and far-
1549 reaching forms of media. In November of last year, Nielsen
1550 Media Research reported that 97 percent of Latinos over the
1551 age of 18 listened to radio in some form every month.

1552 This phenomenon is not unique only to the Latino

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1553 community. Racial and ethnic minorities in my state and
1554 across this country turn to radio for content that is more
1555 inclusive of their stories, their culture, and their
1556 experiences and their languages.

1557 Mr. Chapman, I know my colleagues have asked about this
1558 because it is an important issue. Can you speak further to
1559 what factors allow AM radio to target underserved minority
1560 communities more effectively than other broadcast mediums,
1561 and whether or not radio is in one or more languages in
1562 America?

1563 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, thank you for the question.
1564 An often times overlooked aspect of diversity and voice is
1565 the access to entry. And what I am talking about is the
1566 price of a radio station.

1567 So AM radio stations are typically much less expensive
1568 today than FM radio stations. What that means is somebody
1569 wanting to break into our industry that has a desire to speak
1570 to a specific community, a voice, or a community of color,
1571 has the opportunity to get into broadcast ownership where it
1572 might be much more difficult with a large general market
1573 signal. So that is a very important aspect of how they talk

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1574 to the community that they are targeting.

1575 It is -- while it is often overlooked, that
1576 relationship, ultimately, as you referenced, the high
1577 percentage in the Latino community of listening to the
1578 station, it is very similar which also occurs in the African
1579 American community. Stations that have a diverse listener
1580 base often times have the strongest listener base because of
1581 the relationship with that community.

1582 *Mr. Cardenas. So cultural competency and ownership
1583 does, in fact, create an environment where this -- the
1584 business has -- stands a higher likelihood of reaching more
1585 people, therefore being more successful?

1586 *Mr. Chapman. Absolutely. I can tell you by
1587 experience, when I was general sales manager of WTLC AM in
1588 Indianapolis, if we did not have a message on the air
1589 relating to a particular situation, our audience base often
1590 times would doubt that it actually was existing or taking
1591 place. That relationship, again, is central.

1592 *Mr. Cardenas. Okay. So despite recent improvements,
1593 the number of minority-owned commercial broadcast stations
1594 still lags significantly behind the representational share of

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1595 the U.S. population.

1596 Mr. Chapman, as somebody with experience in purchasing
1597 and operating radio stations, I am wondering if you might
1598 have some thoughts or initiatives Congress can take to
1599 encourage others to follow your path and expand the number of
1600 minority-owned commercial radio stations across the country.

1601 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you for the question, Congressman.
1602 Our industry is at the best when we are reflective of the
1603 communities where we operate. There is an unspoken charge
1604 that the radio stations need to speak to the people that are
1605 available in the community.

1606 A number of years ago there was the tax certificate that
1607 was available for diverse groups. As broadcasters, we would
1608 welcome to see that type of thing in place once again,
1609 because we know the more that we have a citizenry that is
1610 informed of the issues that are taking place, it is the best
1611 way to guide people through tough times.

1612 *Mr. Cardenas. Yes, it is very important because the --
1613 you mentioned earlier what it takes to enter into that
1614 industry, that business. There are some barriers.

1615 We mourn the loss of somebody who owned radio stations,

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1616 television stations, who got his opportunity in the early
1617 1970s when the FCC actually said, you know, let's see if we
1618 can entice minorities to go ahead and get involved in
1619 ownership. And that was Walter Ulloa out of Los Angeles. He
1620 grew up in a poor side of town, but ended up doing very, very
1621 well, and brought a tremendous cultural competency to every
1622 station that he was a part of, and therefore was incredibly
1623 successful.

1624 So one of the things that I would like to see happen --
1625 and we don't have enough time today -- is to see some of your
1626 recommendations forwarded to this committee, examples of the
1627 past where we have been successful in getting more
1628 participation, and then also maybe some innovative things we
1629 could do going forward.

1630 With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1631 *Mr. Latta. The gentleman yields back, and the chair
1632 now recognizes the gentleman from Florida's 2nd district for
1633 five minutes.

1634 *Mr. Dunn. Thank you very much, Chairman Latta. As we
1635 have all heard today, AM radio continues to be important. It
1636 offers a broad range of programing and essential emergency

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1637 announcements are transmitted classically on the AM bands.
1638 Given the long wavelength of AM radio, we can hear from
1639 stations hundreds of miles away, which makes this an ideal
1640 form of communications in emergencies.

1641 I am aware that technology innovations bring changes to
1642 the status quo, and we now have FM, and satellite radio, and
1643 Internet, et cetera. But when the prominent lines of
1644 communications fail, when individuals can't access the
1645 Internet, or when there is a natural disaster, AM radio is
1646 the last resort. I don't -- for the life of me, I am not
1647 sure why we are discussing getting rid of that at this
1648 particular juncture. I have a few questions for you.

1649 Colonel DeMaise, thank you for your time with the panel
1650 today. With your background as a deputy director of
1651 emergency management and many previous roles in this field, I
1652 think you know the importance of effective communications
1653 during emergencies.

1654 And Mr. Chapman, your experience in broadcasting is
1655 certainly germane, as well. In the Florida Panhandle we
1656 suffered a category 5 hurricane that seriously impacted our
1657 lives and our communications. We literally lost all cell

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1658 phones, landlines, Internet, and even our police radio
1659 repeaters for nearly two weeks. What we didn't lose was AM
1660 radio. So with the potential removal of AM radios for most
1661 of the major automobile manufacturers, do you think FEMA will
1662 be able to communicate effectively with individuals during
1663 disasters?

1664 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
1665 question, Congressman. As you mentioned, the redundancy that
1666 we have built within the integrated public alert and warning
1667 system relies upon the AM radio as its most reliable form of
1668 communication during those critical moments when those high
1669 winds and other factors can destroy the actual cellular
1670 infrastructure or other means of communication with which we
1671 have to communicate with the public during a crisis.

1672 So I think FEMA recognizes --

1673 *Mr. Dunn. They recognize the importance --

1674 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. -- absolutely have, that
1675 it is incredibly important to --

1676 *Mr. Dunn. Mr. Chapman, same question.

1677 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, thank you. I believe that
1678 there is all kinds of redundancies that are built into the

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1679 EAS system. That is why it works well.

1680 But for the reasons that we have pointed out, AM sits at
1681 the very beginning of the chain. The AM stations are far
1682 superior to the other mechanisms and the emergency alert
1683 system to start it. It is why we chose for 75 percent of the
1684 primary entry point stations to be AM radio stations.

1685 *Mr. Dunn. That sounds like a strong, strong
1686 affirmation.

1687 And Mr. Schmidt, do you have a feeling how much it costs
1688 to put an AM radio in a car?

1689 *Mr. Schmidt. No, I don't have an actual cost for an AM
1690 radio. Again, it probably varies between individual
1691 manufacturers, and those are proprietary and closely held.

1692 But again, we are committed and -- to providing the
1693 alerts across the full spectrum of the IPAWS system. And we
1694 also have -- provide just a vast offer of choices for our
1695 manufacturers.

1696 And oh, by the way, there is still 99 percent of
1697 vehicles on the road today that have AM radios. So we will
1698 have AM radio for quite a while as we look at the future and
1699 see what makes sense in terms of the IPAWS system and FEMA's

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1700 approach. Thank you.

1701 *Mr. Dunn. So I guess I will close on this note. There
1702 are 82 million Americans listening to AM radio, and there are
1703 2 million Americans driving electric vehicles. I think it is
1704 a pretty obvious thing to leave the AM radios alone.

1705 With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back. Thank you.

1706 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back, and
1707 the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Michigan for
1708 five minutes.

1709 *Mrs. Dingell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1710 Well, AM radio may seem arcane to some. We have already
1711 seen in this hearing it currently serves as the backbone of
1712 our nation's emergency alert system, providing an important
1713 backstop in times of need, and has proven its continued
1714 reliability as other networks fail, which is why the
1715 announcement by some automakers to remove AM radio from cars
1716 has raised significant concerns for Americans.

1717 There are valid questions regarding the overall reach of
1718 various forms of emergency communications: the depth of
1719 information provided by those alerts, free access to alerts,
1720 and the resiliency of the infrastructure required to provide

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1721 these alerts.

1722 It is crucial we ensure that all Americans can freely
1723 access lifesaving information in times of need through
1724 interrelated, innovative, and overlapping forms of emergency
1725 communication systems. But at the same time, we can't ignore
1726 or stymie technological innovation.

1727 Let me start with you, Mr. Schmidt. In your testimony
1728 you mentioned that the Integrated Public Alert and Warning
1729 System Program Management Office emphasized in its strategic
1730 plan for fiscal year 2226 [sic] difficulties in moving away
1731 from radio and broadcast as the primary channels for news and
1732 information. In your estimation, if we had an emergency
1733 right now during this very hearing, would you say that the
1734 current IPAWS system is fully equipped to serve and reach
1735 every American in times of emergency without assistance from
1736 AM radio? Yes or no.

1737 *Mr. Schmidt. I can't opine on --

1738 *Mrs. Dingell. Yes or no, please.

1739 *Mr. Schmidt. Madam Chairman -- I mean, sorry,
1740 Congresswoman Dingell, no. I do not have the ability to
1741 answer that question because I am not FEMA. I am not the

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1742 government. I am not the one that developed this -- the
1743 program. We are the ones that work with that program to try
1744 to support it the best we can.

1745 *Mrs. Dingell. Well, I have talked to them. And the
1746 fact of the matter is, based on my conversations, that we are
1747 not currently adequately prepared to reach all Americans in
1748 the event of a disaster without the assistance of AM radio
1749 services as a backdrop.

1750 I am grateful that all the members of the Alliance for
1751 Automotive Innovation have committed to providing multiple
1752 channels of free emergency alert access to consumers. But we
1753 need to get far more specific about how they receive these
1754 alerts. Mr. Schmidt, can you share with us through what
1755 medium consumers can expect to receive free emergency alerts
1756 in automobiles moving forward? Is it digital, analog, FM,
1757 AM, satellite or another technology?

1758 And are the companies approaching the issue differently?

1759 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for the question. Yes, with
1760 respect to free, that varies between mediums, and even within
1761 mediums, so I can't comment --

1762 *Mrs. Dingell. So that is a very basic question here.

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1763 *Mr. Schmidt. However, what I will say is there are
1764 certainly, for example, satellite, where satellite has their
1765 free Barker channel, which is always there and runs -- and is
1766 without subscription. And there are a lot of the analogs and
1767 other mechanisms which are free, as well.

1768 *Mrs. Dingell. So, Mr. Chairman, I am going to suggest,
1769 for instance, by the way, Tesla does not offer AM now in its
1770 vehicles. I believe that this committee should ask every
1771 manufacturer whether they are going to -- how long, what the
1772 commitment is, how much it is going to cost, is it going to
1773 be streamed, and when they say it is going to be free, what
1774 is the definition of free?

1775 Now, Mr. Schmidt, how have your member companies also
1776 ensured that this medium remains resilient in times of crisis
1777 or when wireless network outages occur?

1778 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, again, like I said, IPAWS is a
1779 network of stuff, so depending on the specific event, certain
1780 mediums are maybe more appropriate than others, and that is
1781 why there is --

1782 *Mrs. Dingell. But not everybody may have access,
1783 because everybody is not telling us exactly how they are

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1784 going to make sure they have access to those free.

1785 Mr. Schmidt, when will these emergency alert services
1786 come standard in all new vehicles?

1787 Is this commitment the same across all member companies,
1788 or will there be differences in terms of what emergency
1789 communication services they will receive in their new
1790 vehicles?

1791 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, I can't comment on individual
1792 manufacturers on what exactly is in their program, but there
1793 is a commitment that there will be at least some free
1794 emergency alert received through those vehicles.

1795 *Mrs. Dingell. But we don't know whether it is going to
1796 be ongoing.

1797 I am going to clearly say consumers should not bear the
1798 cost of receiving lifesaving emergency information, period.
1799 I think it is important that every member company you
1800 represent be unambiguously clear about how consumers will
1801 receive these alerts free of charge and standard in new
1802 vehicles.

1803 I have other questions I would like to submit for the
1804 record, Mr. Chairman.

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1805 [The information follows:]

1806

1807 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

1808

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1809 *Mrs. Dingell. And I yield back.

1810 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back, and
1811 the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Utah for five
1812 minutes.

1813 *Mr. Curtis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our
1814 witnesses.

1815 Listen, I come to this meeting a huge fan of AM radio.
1816 I remember in the 1980s -- I will date myself -- I used to
1817 travel in Colorado, and I could tune in to the Salt Lake City
1818 AM radio station and listen to local football games and local
1819 news. And, of course, I, like many of my colleagues here,
1820 want to make sure that AM radio is vibrant and is viable for
1821 many years into the future.

1822 But if I am honest, I am a little conflicted with the
1823 concept of the Federal Government mandating how that is done.
1824 And so I come to this hearing with an open mind, not with a
1825 predetermined judgment, but just simply an open mind.

1826 Some of those memories also include eight track tapes,
1827 cigarette lighters, manual windows, and I find myself asking,
1828 gosh, you know, if the eight track tape industry had lobbied
1829 for a mandate to keep that eight track tapes, would we still

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1830 be listening to eight track tapes? And I don't think so.

1831 So, Mr. Chapman, let's agree that the vibrancy of AM
1832 radio is important for entertainment, for education, and,
1833 clearly, as we have heard today, for emergency situations.

1834

1835 But as I travel my district -- and I would challenge anybody
1836 to have a more rural district than I have in Utah; as a
1837 matter of fact, half of my district is actually frontier -- I
1838 have more success streaming than I do actually getting AM
1839 radio signals. And I am just wondering, if we set aside this
1840 concept about cars for just a minute, isn't the vibrancy of
1841 AM radio really contingent on a transition to streaming? And
1842 should we be having more conversations, right, about how to
1843 do that?

1844 Look, when I am here in Washington, D.C., I like to
1845 listen to that same local AM station. When I jog on the
1846 mall, I can listen to news back home, and I don't really care
1847 about even an emergency warning here in D.C. I would care
1848 about one back more in my district. So could you just
1849 explore with me, like, the future of AM radio?

1850 And if we all agree we want to keep it vibrant,

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1851 shouldn't we be spending more time talking about
1852 transitioning to kind of a new world?

1853 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, I appreciate the question.
1854 I think it is a fair question.

1855 One of the things -- we all come with preconceived
1856 notions, and one of those is when you reference eight track
1857 tapes from many years ago, I am part of the generation that
1858 grew up with that. And when I listen to AM radio today, I
1859 hear static and it doesn't sound with the same fidelity that
1860 FM radio sounds. But for the reasons I pointed out earlier,
1861 there are clear superior advantages for AM radio in times of
1862 emergency.

1863 And so I also recognize that we have discussed that at
1864 length this morning, but I think that safety point is so --

1865 *Mr. Curtis. So I guess my point is there is far higher
1866 likelihood that I will hear that outside of my car than
1867 inside my car. I don't have a car here in D.C. Some of my
1868 staff doesn't have a car. And yet, if we explore ways for
1869 people to access AM radio, aren't we actually ensuring far
1870 more likelihood that they would get those alerts if we are
1871 making sure that everybody can access AM radio really --

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1872 almost no matter where they are, with today's technology?

1873 By the way, during the hearing my staff prompted me and
1874 I just looked on Amazon. You can buy an AM radio for about
1875 \$5. So -- those of you who want to know what it costs to add
1876 it to a car, right?

1877 So this is not a cost issue, right? It maybe is a
1878 technology issue, and where we are going in the future issue.

1879 Yes, I will give you a chance to respond. Then I want
1880 to ask a couple more questions.

1881 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, one last point. It was back
1882 in January we were moving our daughter from Denver up to
1883 Seattle. And so we drove through large sections of Utah, you
1884 know, in our 2013 Toyota Avalon. It is a hybrid. And I can
1885 listen to AM radio in that car through that stretch. And
1886 there were times where there was not an FM station and there
1887 were times when there weren't AM stations. And they both
1888 complement each other in some of those more rural areas.

1889 *Mr. Curtis. And just for -- simply for time, I am
1890 going to move on. I would tell you, though, I can better
1891 access that AM streaming in my car in rural Utah than I can
1892 frequently with stations.

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1893 Colonel, that cigarette lighter in my parents' car was
1894 often used to start campfires, and could be considered
1895 essential for emergencies. Maybe only in rural Utah, right?

1896 So in your view, like, are we looking at this through
1897 the wrong paradigm? Should we be looking at new technology?

1898 And here again, not to diminish AM. I want AM to be
1899 part of whatever our solution is, but what role is -- are we
1900 -- should we be looking to new technology and its
1901 advancements, and not get stuck in a paradigm that has to be
1902 a traditional AM radio as we think about it?

1903 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Congressman, great
1904 question. You know, I think we are always --

1905 *Mr. Curtis. I got to get a super-quick answer, because
1906 we are almost out of time.

1907 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Exploring new
1908 technologies, I agree with you 100 percent. But right now,
1909 as currently constituted in an emergency situation, the AM
1910 platform is critical to communicate -

1911 *Mr. Curtis. Okay. And I don't dispute that. It is
1912 not the AM platform, it is that thing that -- is there a
1913 paradigm that has to be -- look and feel and act like an old

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1914 AM radio that I am questioning.

1915 I am sorry. I am out of time, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

1916 *Mr. Latta. The gentleman yields back, and the chair
1917 now recognizes the gentlelady from New Hampshire for five
1918 minutes.

1919 *Ms. Kuster. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and
1920 thank you for being with us.

1921 I think it is clear from the discussion today that AM
1922 radio remains a staple communication channel across the
1923 country, including my rural district. From music and talk
1924 shows to traffic updates and the news, AM radio is a trusted
1925 platform to connect people with what they want to listen to.

1926 Many AM broadcast radio stations operate locally, and
1927 help to keep their listeners informed about what is happening
1928 in our community. Most critically, Americans know and trust
1929 they can tune into their local AM station to receive alerts
1930 and stay safe during emergencies, including snowstorms and
1931 other emergencies in my state.

1932 For anyone who has ever found themselves caught driving
1933 in a sudden storm, AM radio is where you turn to first. AM
1934 radio is especially important in rural communities where cell

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1935 coverage can be spotty and broadband services may be limited,
1936 and that is classic for my district. For rural Americans, AM
1937 radio is a reliable and accessible way to stay connected when
1938 it matters most.

1939 And while Congress continues to work to connect rural
1940 communities and bridge the digital divide, AM radio remains
1941 an essential communications channel. That is why I joined
1942 our chairman, Mr. Latta, and Representative Pence in sending
1943 a letter seeking information from the major automakers on
1944 their plans to phase AM radios out of their vehicles. I
1945 remain concerned that removing the radios from new vehicles
1946 will put rural Americans at risk of not receiving critical
1947 emergency alerts and safety information.

1948 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, can you elaborate on other
1949 available emergency communication tools, and how these tools
1950 operate in rural areas? What are the alternatives?

1951 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. So in our rural areas,
1952 when we push a message through the integrated public alert
1953 and warning system, it hits several different pieces of the
1954 architecture. One is communicating through those AM and FM
1955 platforms, certainly through the television, communicating

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1956 those critical messages, but also it ties into WEA, the
1957 Wireless Emergency Alert system, which, again, depending upon
1958 the reach of those cellular towers, will hopefully be able to
1959 connect with those rural areas.

1960 But as we have seen, you know, even in the areas very
1961 adjacent to my area in southern New Jersey, which are very
1962 rural, some of that cellular reach is very limited. In some
1963 cases that messaging doesn't necessarily reach.

1964 *Ms. Kuster. Get through. Thank you. AM radio is not
1965 the only emergency management tool available, but it is
1966 clearly our most reliable tool to reach the widest audience
1967 at this time. While I recognize the importance of AM radio,
1968 I also support the innovation and development of new
1969 technologies, and I think this is where Mr. Curtis was going.

1970 Electric vehicles are the future of our nation's
1971 transportation system, and we must be careful not to stifle
1972 widespread deployment. Mr. Schmidt, how will a potential
1973 mandate to require AM radios in all vehicles impact the
1974 function and adoption of electric vehicles?

1975 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for the question.

1976 Yes, as I mentioned earlier, regulation is a blunt

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1977 instrument, and it is -- it goes to perpetuity. So even if
1978 you have vehicles that now have this technology, you are
1979 mandating them forever, basically. And you are looking at a
1980 system that FEMA has concerns about its declining
1981 listenership. And we are looking at more and better ways of
1982 trying to deliver alerts. So I am -- I think we are
1983 generally not against -- or not in favor of a mandate in this
1984 area.

1985 And again, we have -- our commitment is that we are
1986 going to be providing as much through the IPAWS network as
1987 possible. Consumers have a wide range of options, and
1988 currently there are about 99 percent of vehicles on the road,
1989 which -- that will not change dramatically in the next
1990 future. So we will have time to look at how we maybe evolve
1991 this system in a more positive way. Thank you.

1992 *Ms. Kuster. And one for -- more for you, Mr. Schmidt.
1993 EV adoption in rural communities is already falling behind
1994 for a number of reasons. Will the removal of AM radios be
1995 yet another barrier to adoption of EVs in rural communities?

1996 *Mr. Schmidt. As I mentioned, I think we have pretty --
1997 a fairly reasonable array of technologies that our EV

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1998 customers can use to reach and get to these alerts and et
1999 cetera. So I don't see it as being an impediment for EV
2000 penetration.

2001 *Ms. Kuster. Thank you. Congress has a delicate
2002 responsibility of protecting public safety without hampering
2003 innovation, and I look forward to our continuing discussion
2004 in this committee.

2005 And with that, I yield back.

2006 *Mr. Latta. Thank you.

2007 *Ms. Kuster. Fifteen seconds to spare.

2008 *Mr. Latta. Well, actually, it was 16 over.

2009 [Laughter.]

2010 *Mr. Latta. But we will ignore that. The gentlelady's
2011 time has expired, and the chair now recognizes the gentleman
2012 from Pennsylvania for five minutes.

2013 *Mr. Joyce. Thank you, Chairman Latta and Ranking
2014 Member Matsui for putting together today's hearing on AM
2015 radio, and thank you to the witnesses for providing such
2016 valuable insight.

2017 My district is in the heart of rural Pennsylvania. Many
2018 of my constituents, farmers and rural residents alike, rely

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2019 every day on AM radio to receive their local news, from
2020 weather to sports.

2021 We hear all too often that information is power. But in
2022 my district in Pennsylvania, information is protection.
2023 With that knowledge, we know that FEMA relies on AM radio to
2024 provide alerts through the National Emergency Alert System to
2025 our communities. Thus, the protection. With the increasing
2026 prevalence of electric vehicles, some have raised concerns
2027 that the elimination of AM radio will restrict critical
2028 access to emergency alerts for those without cell phones.
2029 Some believe FM could soon follow, despite millions of
2030 Americans still relying on radio for their news, and various
2031 talk shows, and ultimately, for their protection.

2032 Mr. Chapman, given that AM radio is often used in times
2033 of severe weather and natural disasters such as tornadoes and
2034 hurricanes, what kind of safeguards do these stations have in
2035 place to ensure that these alerts are able to reach as many
2036 people as possible?

2037 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you for the opportunity to comment
2038 on that, Congressman. I can tell you that every radio
2039 station that is part of the network -- and it is virtually

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2040 every station across the country -- has certain protocols and
2041 systems that they have to adhere to. There is regular
2042 testing that takes place.

2043 And so, unlike the other systems that are in place, we
2044 continually go through and make sure that free over-the-air
2045 radio is accessible, and that there is not holes or gaps in
2046 our system.

2047 *Mr. Joyce. So having that extra layer of protection,
2048 having that testing in place to make sure that the holes and
2049 gaps are not present, particularly in areas like rural parts
2050 of America, do you feel that deleting AM radio will provide a
2051 national safety risk?

2052 *Mr. Chapman. So -- and I think that is the biggest
2053 question, obviously, that we are talking about right here,
2054 because the EAS system has redundancies. You know, we have
2055 talked about that this morning. But there are parts and
2056 roles that AM radio plays in it that cannot be substituted by
2057 other forms.

2058 You know, it was chosen -- and we have talked about it a
2059 couple of times -- as the primary entry point for the
2060 national alerts that go out. And the reason for that is

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2061 those radio stations cover 90 percent of the United States.
2062 There are 60 of the 70-some radio stations that are PEP
2063 stations that cover the entire network. And that is the most
2064 reliable method that we have in any time of crisis.

2065 *Mr. Joyce. And that reliability is important.

2066 Colonel DeMaise, how many cell phones are not capable of
2067 the wireless emergency alerts?

2068 And could those that are non-capable cell phones be at
2069 risk, without AM radio to missing emergency, Amber, and
2070 presidential alerts, especially in rural communities?

2071 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
2072 question, Congressman. I don't have the data on what that
2073 would turn out to be, but I can only state that having the AM
2074 radio available to communicate those messages out as a
2075 backup, whether or not that cellular device is functioning or
2076 not, is of critical importance.

2077 *Mr. Joyce. And as a follow-up, are individuals
2078 currently able to opt out of these imminent threat and Amber
2079 alerts through the WARN Act, defeating the function of this
2080 system?

2081 And without those mobile alerts, what are the remaining

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2082 ways to be notified of severe weather?

2083 Or are these communication systems in the near future
2084 going to be implemented to reach rural constituents like mine
2085 during an emergency?

2086 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Again, I am not aware of
2087 the process of opting out of certain messaging, as per the
2088 process, but I can state that we will still leverage other
2089 platforms through the integrated public alert and warning
2090 systems, such as television. We have the ability to leverage
2091 other sources of communications such as reverse 911, where we
2092 can hit hard-line phones, or the -- through the Resident
2093 Connect program.

2094 But there are multiple means to build that redundancy in
2095 communicating with the public. But again, as mentioned
2096 throughout the hearing this morning, AM radio is the most
2097 consistent, dependable, and reliable, particularly for those
2098 areas that are more rural.

2099 *Mr. Joyce. And I think it is worth, as my time
2100 diminishes here, repeating that AM radio is the most
2101 consistent, reliable form of communication that we have right
2102 now.

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2103 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My time has expired. I yield.

2104 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back, and
2105 the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Illinois for
2106 five minutes.

2107 *Ms. Kelly. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank
2108 you and Ranking Member Matsui for holding this important
2109 hearing this morning.

2110 I also want to thank our witnesses for your testimony to
2111 help us better understand why keeping AM radio receivers in
2112 new vehicles has become an emerging issue, and why these
2113 antennas are something so many EV manufacturers have removed
2114 from their vehicles.

2115 I am well aware that AM radio receivers in cars play an
2116 important role for various subsets of our community. One of
2117 my channels in Chicago that I listen to all the time, WVON,
2118 they are very important, especially in the Black community in
2119 hearing different opinions, getting the word out what is
2120 going on locally, but also nationally also. However, I have
2121 also heard from those who argue that AM radio receivers in
2122 cars are less of a necessity, as you have been hearing
2123 somewhat here today.

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2124 I am encouraged by today's hearing because we have
2125 Members of Congress that -- we can now be informed by
2126 industry leaders as to why and -- how this important this
2127 technology is, and how useful it is to our constituents.

2128 So my district is urban, suburban, and rural. So I want
2129 to talk a little bit about -- I went from 1,200 farms in the
2130 remap to 2,000, so I want to hear, Mr. Chapman, how do local
2131 farmers in the field and on rural roadways utilize AM radio,
2132 and what would be or what is the alternative for my rural
2133 constituents if their AM radio was not accessible to them in
2134 their cars?

2135 *Mr. Chapman. Congresswoman Kelly, thank you for the
2136 question.

2137 In rural America, AM often times is the best vehicle
2138 that we have to get out talk programing, extended long-form,
2139 and it is often times not used for songs and things like
2140 that. AM radio stations are the primary point that ag news
2141 reaches the community that it is intended. And so AM is
2142 central to agriculture, just like it is with communities in
2143 urban areas.

2144 *Ms. Kelly. So -- and according to what my colleague,

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2145 Mr. Curtis, was trying to say, and somewhat my colleague, Ms.
2146 Kuster, as far as technology and moving forward, is there any
2147 moving forward, really, for local farmers and rural
2148 constituents if we didn't have AM radio?

2149 *Mr. Chapman. So one of the things that has come up
2150 this morning is there are multiple ways for people in this
2151 day and age to find different things. A central point to why
2152 this all is really important is AM is the easiest way for
2153 people to do it. There are things that people in rural areas
2154 can subscribe to, but ag news coming over a satellite to a
2155 farm may not be the best use because of the subscription fees
2156 that are involved delivering satellite news to that
2157 individual farm. Satellite radio is another example.

2158 All of these things have subscriptions. This is the one
2159 mechanism that we have that is free to deliver these types of
2160 things.

2161 *Ms. Kelly. Thank you.

2162 And Colonel, how does AM radio help level the playing
2163 field for non-English speakers, especially in emergency
2164 situations?

2165 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the

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2166 question, Congresswoman.

2167 As mentioned throughout the hearings today, the
2168 relatively low barrier to entry to broadcast to different
2169 diverse communities through this particular platform make it
2170 ideal for us to communicate with underserved and socially
2171 vulnerable communities that may not have access to some of
2172 those resources in their native languages. The ability of
2173 those broadcasters to communicate directly with the groups
2174 that they message out to, our information is of critical
2175 importance to making sure the public is fully aware of what
2176 the situation is as it relates to disasters.

2177 *Ms. Kelly. Thank you, and I am going to yield back 57
2178 seconds.

2179 Thank you to the witnesses.

2180 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back, and
2181 the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia's 12th
2182 district for five minutes.

2183 *Mr. Allen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to the
2184 opportunity to address the importance of AM radio and, as has
2185 already been mentioned, in our rural communities.

2186 I represent a large part of Georgia's rural community in

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2187 the southeast, and I want to emphasize that AM radio plays an
2188 important part in our community, particularly in areas where
2189 consistent wireless service is a challenge. And that is due
2190 to factors of pine trees and other things. AM radio remains
2191 a lifeline for my constituents, providing reliable access to
2192 vital information, emergency alerts, and public
2193 announcements. It is crucial to understand that in rural
2194 areas like mine AM radio is a critical source of news,
2195 information, and entertainment for residents who may have
2196 limited access to other communication technologies.

2197 The reach and reliability of AM radio signals make it
2198 the most dependable means of communication in rural
2199 communities, as they can penetrate obstacles such as dense
2200 vegetation. I have witnessed firsthand how AM radio stations
2201 in my district have played a vital role in disseminating
2202 information during emergencies and severe weather events,
2203 ensuring that our constituents stay informed and safe.

2204 I urge the continued collaboration between automakers,
2205 radio broadcasters, and technology experts to find innovative
2206 solutions that preserve the accessibility and reach of AM
2207 radio, while addressing the unique challenges posed by EVs.

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2208 Colonel DeMaise, IHS Markit forecasts that by 2035 45
2209 percent of all new car sales will be electric vehicles. From
2210 an emergency alerting perspective, if all of these cars or a
2211 large subset of them do not have AM radio, what is your
2212 confidence level that your state will be able to send
2213 notifications that your citizens will receive?

2214 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
2215 question, Congressman.

2216 Our experience has been during those critical moments in
2217 disasters, the cellular networks can tend to be overwhelmed,
2218 either through compromise of the infrastructure due to
2219 damaging winds, or if it is overload from multiple residents
2220 trying to communicate with loved ones. The network can tend
2221 to collapse and not be available to the customer base.
2222 However, as many people in our population that exist are able
2223 to access a radio no matter the condition [sic].

2224 *Mr. Allen. Mr. Chapman, you mentioned how many PEP
2225 stations or AM stations in your testimony. Can you elaborate
2226 on how important AM is to EAS, and why other forms of
2227 communication don't have the scale and reach that AM does?

2228 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you, Congressman.

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2229 AM radio stations are the primary entry point. The
2230 national alert would begin on the AM radio stations, at least
2231 75 percent of them. There are some 80 radio stations that
2232 are PEP stations. And so that is the beginning point. Those
2233 stations were chosen for the characteristics we have talked
2234 about already, and it is central to making sure that, when
2235 there is an important message, it gets out in a way that can
2236 be received by the other stations that are part of the EAS
2237 network. We begin with our most important that can reach
2238 with the most number of people, and then we go to the next
2239 level, which is an LP1, and then we go to the next level,
2240 which is an LP2. It begins with the PEP stations.

2241 *Mr. Allen. Thank you.

2242 Mr. Schmidt, have there been studies on how AM radio has
2243 interfered with or -- interfered with the spectrum utilized
2244 in autonomous vehicles?

2245 *Mr. Schmidt. I am not aware of it.

2246 *Mr. Allen. Mr. Chapman, from my understanding, the
2247 issue with electric vehicles is that the drive train
2248 generates electromagnetic frequencies on the same wavelength
2249 as analog AM radio signals, which heavily interferes with the

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2250 signal quality. Is that correct?

2251 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, Toyota Motor Company has got
2252 roughly 5.1 million electrified vehicles on the road. That
2253 is more than all the other combined automakers in the United
2254 States. Some of those are hybrids, some of them are electric
2255 vehicles. And they have determined that they have got a way
2256 to isolate the noise. It is not an issue.

2257 You know, I can tell you that the early electric
2258 vehicles had AM radios in them, and most of the vehicles that
2259 were manufactured before 2015 all had AM radios in it. So
2260 there has been some change for some reason. Electromagnetic
2261 interference can be protected in these cars.

2262 *Mr. Allen. Okay. And as far as the AM radio signals,
2263 do they experience the same kind of interference as analog
2264 signals?

2265 *Mr. Chapman. Analog and digital stations interfere --
2266 interference, but it presents itself in different ways.

2267 *Mr. Allen. Okay. What would be the cost of upgrading
2268 a tower from analog to digital?

2269 *Mr. Chapman. This is a cost that varies by radio
2270 station, but it would be a significant cost. So it would be

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2271 difficult, unless I was commenting on a particular tower, a
2272 particular transmission facility.

2273 *Mr. Allen. Okay. Thank you so much.

2274 And Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

2275 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back, and
2276 the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Texas for five
2277 minutes.

2278 *Mrs. Fletcher. Thank you so much, Chairman Latta and
2279 Ranking Member Matsui, for convening today's hearing, and
2280 thank you to all of our witnesses for the time that you have
2281 taken this morning to testify.

2282 It is not surprising to me, as I go toward the end of
2283 the questioning, that a lot of the things that I had prepared
2284 to talk to you about this morning have already been covered.
2285 But I do want to talk about just a couple of those things,
2286 and follow up on some of the good questions that have been
2287 asked, and some of the questions -- some of the answers that
2288 you have given.

2289 Of course, I represent the Houston, Texas area. And so
2290 we are very familiar with the importance of AM radio for
2291 emergency alerts, as well as for all the other purposes we

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2292 have been talking about here this morning. And I know my
2293 constituents care deeply about this issue in the last just
2294 couple of months, as this issue has been more and more in the
2295 news and in our conversations. I have heard from hundreds of
2296 constituents in a very organic way about their concerns about
2297 making sure that they can continue to have access to AM
2298 radio.

2299 And so there are certain things we have touched on and I
2300 just want to emphasize are really important to us. We have
2301 talked a little bit about the importance of being able to
2302 communicate in different languages. In my own district, in
2303 our area, more than 140 languages are spoken. The idea that
2304 you can get to various communities through AM radio has
2305 absolutely borne out in our district, and really important
2306 for communicating within the district.

2307 And of course, we are no stranger to weather disasters
2308 and other emergencies -- unfortunately, summer and winter --
2309 and this has been a critical lifeline for us. And so these
2310 really are the priorities of our community, and you all have
2311 talked a lot about that this morning, so I appreciate your
2312 insights. It has been incredibly helpful.

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2313 What I am not totally sure -- Representative Allen was
2314 just asking a couple of questions about this, and I think,
2315 Mr. Chapman, you were just saying -- something has changed
2316 recently, and I am not sure we have gotten the answer today
2317 about why exactly this move is being made, why the
2318 manufacturers specifically and the cars are thinking about
2319 removing it. There are some suggestions about whether there
2320 is interference with the AM signal and the cars. But as you
2321 said, this is -- we have had electric cars for going on two
2322 decades now, and this is a more recent issue. So I think
2323 that is something that I would really like to understand
2324 better, kind of why it is happening, and I am not sure we
2325 have got the answer to that question this morning.

2326 And then the other thing that Mr. Curtis touched on that
2327 I think is also important was this question about the
2328 transition, and the difference between digital and analog. I
2329 too love listening to my digital radio here in D.C., and I
2330 tune it to my Houston Public Media station and listen to what
2331 is going on at home every single morning.

2332 But those are the questions, and I think it goes
2333 together, kind of this -- what is the change? Does it have

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2334 to do with digital versus analog?

2335 And so I am going to look to you, Mr. Schmidt, if you
2336 could just talk a little bit, and try to give us a concise
2337 answer on why this is happening now, and then maybe turn to
2338 you, Mr. Chapman, for a final comment, if we have time.

2339 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for the question.

2340 With respect to changes over time, I have to admit my
2341 expertise is in the safety end, and not in the actual EV
2342 architecture. So I am going to have to come back with you
2343 with some information.

2344 *Mrs. Fletcher. I appreciate that.

2345 *Mr. Schmidt. I think it is a great question, and begs
2346 the information, but we will provide that for you.

2347 *Mrs. Fletcher. Okay, thank you, yes. I would
2348 appreciate that, if you could supplement. I know we will
2349 have a couple of weeks at the end of the hearing to
2350 supplement the record, and I think it is really important for
2351 us to understand that.

2352 [The information follows:]

2353

2354 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

2355

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2356 *Mrs. Fletcher. And so I guess -- can I ask sort of two
2357 related questions, Mr. Chapman, one based on your experience,
2358 and two, what we have heard is that there is a move toward
2359 digital that could be part of it, but also can you speak to
2360 whether not just the expense, but the differences you might
2361 see in terms of reach, resiliency, and kind of the depth and
2362 strength of the analog and digital signals?

2363 Like I said, I love my digital radio, but can you just
2364 talk to that, and what those concerns and issues might be, as
2365 well, in your answer?

2366 *Mr. Chapman. Thank you, Congresswoman.

2367 I listened to you talk about Houston and Harvey. Our
2368 son was in Houston at that time, when 60-some inches of rain
2369 in a little more than a day were dumped on the community.
2370 And I will touch on the digital thing in a moment, but what
2371 was important is he was prepared because he knew the power
2372 was going to go out. He parked his car in a parking garage
2373 up on the second level, and so he was going to be in a place
2374 at least where he could get information. And the power did
2375 go out, and sometimes it was out and on for extended periods.
2376 And so that is a way I think a lot of people who are in

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2377 hurricane areas prepare when something like that comes up.

2378 Just to touch on digital very quickly, it is an option
2379 down the road. But right now broadcasting in all digital,
2380 there is a station that is doing it here in Frederick,
2381 Maryland. Most people can't receive it. It is only a small
2382 percentage of the receivers. It is not an option that is
2383 available to us yet. It should be explored, but EAS depends
2384 on analog stations.

2385 *Mrs. Fletcher. Well, thank you for that. I appreciate
2386 that. And I will just add as I yield back that I too have a
2387 weather radio. It is a great thing to have if you are in an
2388 area like ours, it is entirely weather. But I think it is
2389 critically important that we preserve this ability to
2390 communicate with everyone in times of disaster, and that is
2391 certainly true of our experience in Houston.

2392 So again, Mr. Chairman, I thank you so much for holding
2393 this very important hearing, and I yield back.

2394 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentlelady's time has
2395 expired and yields back. The chair now recognizes the
2396 gentleman from Ohio's 12th district for five minutes.

2397 *Mr. Balderson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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2398 Thank you all for being here today. There is no
2399 question about the importance of AM radio to my constituents
2400 in central and southeastern Ohio. Farmers rely on AM radio
2401 for their weather and crop reports. And as you mentioned in
2402 your testimony, Mr. Chapman, individuals and families living
2403 in broadband deserts rely on AM to stay connected to their
2404 communities.

2405 Mr. Chapman, in your testimony you often refer to the AM
2406 signal as resilient. Can you please briefly explain the
2407 difference between AM and FM signals, and why you believe the
2408 AM signal is more resilient than the FM?

2409 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, thank you for the question.

2410 Touching on the difference in properties, say, for
2411 example, between AM and FM, the FM signal is much shorter.
2412 The AM signal is a much longer wavelength, and what that
2413 means is a longer wavelength travels a much larger distance.
2414 So that is one of the properties. It also will go through
2415 solid objects, unlike what a shorter FM signal will.

2416 So there is ways that it can certainly adapt. And in
2417 the evening, for example, you know, those that might listen
2418 to an AM radio station hear one from a great distance away.

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2419 So there is different things that are signal properties that
2420 are really important to the AM band that the FM band doesn't
2421 possess.

2422 *Mr. Balderson. Okay, thank you. As my colleague Mrs.
2423 Fletcher said, a lot of the questions have been asked, but in
2424 a little different dynamic here we have been hearing a lot
2425 about the analog versus the digital AM radio signals.

2426 In 2020 the FCC issued a report and order authorizing AM
2427 radio stations to voluntarily transition to an all-digital
2428 signal. Back to you again, Mr. Chapman, I apologize. Do any
2429 of your AM radio stations broadcast on a digital signal, and
2430 can you explain the benefits and drawbacks of digital AM
2431 radio signal versus a traditional analog signal?

2432 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman Balderson, I would welcome
2433 the opportunity, if it was a good opportunity, for us to
2434 transition to digital AM. Unfortunately, most of our
2435 listeners can't receive digital signals on the AM band.
2436 There is differences in the receivers and such.

2437 And so, for the same reason it is important to keep AM
2438 radio in cars in its current format. It is important for us
2439 to give access to all Americans for AM in its current form,

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2440 and it would require a change or receiver standards, which is
2441 a different question entirely.

2442 And so the reason we don't make that transition is
2443 people wouldn't hear us any longer.

2444 *Mr. Balderson. Okay. Do you know if any of the AM
2445 stations operating as FEMA primary entry points currently
2446 broadcast through a digital signal?

2447 *Mr. Chapman. No, they do not.

2448 *Mr. Balderson. All right, thank you. You are all done
2449 from my questioning.

2450 Mr. Schmidt, thank you for being here. In the case of
2451 electric vehicles, the batteries interfere with the AM
2452 signal, requiring filters or shielding to be installed to
2453 prevent interference. Following up on my question to Mr.
2454 Chapman, is this interference only an issue with the
2455 traditional analog signal, or would we see the same
2456 interference occur with the digital receiver installed with
2457 electric vehicles?

2458 *Mr. Schmidt. Unfortunately, I am, again, a safety
2459 engineer. And so I don't have the expertise on that at this
2460 moment, but I can certainly bring that back to you.

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2461 *Mr. Balderson. Okay.

2462 Did you want to raise your hand, Mr. Chapman?

2463 *Mr. Chapman. Electromagnetic interference has
2464 different properties for each band, but if it affects AM,
2465 chances are it would affect FM also, whether it was in the
2466 digital or the analog structure. And so the shielding that
2467 takes place in cars needs to protect AM and FM, and that is
2468 generally how they are designed.

2469 *Mr. Balderson. Okay, thank you very much for all of
2470 you being here today.

2471 Mr. Chairman, I yield back my remaining time.

2472 *Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back, and
2473 the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from New York for
2474 five minutes.

2475 *Ms. Clarke. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank
2476 our ranking member, as well. Let me thank our panelists for
2477 joining us today to discuss this important issue.

2478 With the rapid pace of technological advances in
2479 communication technology over the past two decades, it would
2480 be easy to overlook the important role that AM radio has
2481 historically played in keeping us all informed, safe, and

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2482 connected. In addition to often being a primary source of
2483 news for immigrant communities, AM radio signals travel
2484 farther, and can reach far more people than FM radio. What
2485 AM radio may lack in sound quality it more than makes up for
2486 in reach and resiliency, making it an essential component of
2487 our National Public Warning System. The redundancies that AM
2488 emergency broadcasts provide ensures that Americans have a
2489 reliable channel to receive critical information in time of
2490 crisis and natural disasters.

2491 Additionally, AM radio stations play a crucial role in
2492 increasing the diversity of media ownership, as they are more
2493 likely to be owned by women and minority ownership groups
2494 than FM stations and other media. The premature demise of AM
2495 radio would represent a significant blow to efforts to
2496 promote diversity and inclusion in media ownership, and limit
2497 the diversity of programming available to consumers.

2498 With that being said, I am also extremely proud of the
2499 American automakers that have stepped up to help usher in a
2500 clean energy future by shifting more towards electric
2501 vehicles. The transportation sector has long been ripe for
2502 decarbonization, and I commend the automotive industry for

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2503 moving quickly to make a zero-emission transportation future
2504 a concrete reality, instead of simply a possibility.

2505 And as we move towards the future, it is essential that
2506 industry leaders and policymakers alike keep public safety
2507 concerns at top of mind. We can and must safeguard our clean
2508 energy future without sacrificing essential communication
2509 channels in the present.

2510 Mr. Schmidt, first let me thank you for your
2511 organization's plainly-stated commitment to ensuring that
2512 drivers continue to have access to public alerts and safety
2513 warnings. As you stated in your testimony, there are any
2514 number of reasons why automakers make certain choices on
2515 vehicle design and features offered. I would like to get a
2516 better understanding of the technological issues at play with
2517 respect to AM in EVs.

2518 And while explaining decisions to remove AM radio from
2519 EVs, some manufacturers have cited electromagnetic
2520 interference generated from electric batteries or motors as
2521 among the factors impacting that decision. Nevertheless, in
2522 a reversal of its decision to remove AM radio from 2024
2523 models, Ford indicated that it plans to issue a software

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2524 update to vehicles already on the road without AM radio.

2525 Mr. Schmidt, my question is when it comes to addressing
2526 electromagnetic interference, are the solutions rooted in
2527 hardware, software, or a combination of both?

2528 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, as I mentioned, from the Ford
2529 perspective, they had the hardware in the vehicle. They were
2530 planning to remove AM radio, so it was easy to remove it by
2531 software. And then, when they reversed their decision, they
2532 just used software to bring it back.

2533 So I would say that I can't say anything for any other
2534 manufacturers other than Ford, because they authorized me to
2535 -- and they had communications with this committee, as well.

2536 *Ms. Clarke. Got you. So it remains to be seen.

2537 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes.

2538 *Ms. Clarke. Mr. Chapman, in your testimony you spoke
2539 to the importance of AM radio's search and focus on local
2540 communities -- excuse me, reach and focus. Can you expound
2541 briefly on why AM radio is so important for rural, minority,
2542 and historically underserved communities, and how these
2543 communities could be impacted by the demise of AM radio?

2544 *Mr. Schmidt. Congresswoman Clarke, one of the things

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2545 that we touched on earlier but is really important is the
2546 opportunity to get into ownership. We need our ownership to
2547 be reflective of the communities where we operate. The cost
2548 of entry for an AM station is much less than an FM station.

2549 And so often times the stations that program to specific
2550 groups that may not be the general market have chosen to go
2551 in because it is a business model that is sustainable for
2552 them with that cost of entry.

2553 *Ms. Clarke. Very well.

2554 Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

2555 *Mr. Obernolte. [Presiding] The gentlewoman yields
2556 back. We will go next to my colleague from Texas.

2557 Congressman Pfluger, you are recognized for five
2558 minutes.

2559 *Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to
2560 the witnesses for being here.

2561 I want to start, Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, just, you
2562 know, asking a quick question about the security
2563 implications. I am a military guy, myself. You always need
2564 backup communications. You know, and I see kind of that
2565 baseline backup as something that our emergency systems

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2566 completely depend on. Just give me a, you know, a brief
2567 statement on what AM radio does as a kind of a baseline
2568 backup emergency broadcast system, and what it does for our
2569 security in this country.

2570 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you, Congressman. I
2571 am sure, as a military guy, you recall the old phrase, "One
2572 is none, two is one, and three is almost what you need."` `

2573 In the case of emergency management, the ability to have
2574 redundancy, the variety of platforms -- knowing, again, as I
2575 mentioned earlier, that Murphy's Law at some point will
2576 intervene and one, if not multiple, platforms will fail at
2577 the most critical moment is something that we build into our
2578 emergency management processes. We want to make sure that
2579 all those resources are available to communicate with the
2580 public during a crisis.

2581 The AM radio platform, in and of itself, has the
2582 greatest reach of all of our forms of communication with the
2583 public, and has been proven to be the most consistently
2584 reliable.

2585 *Mr. Pfluger. Well, very good. You know, I think, too,
2586 of our local broadcaster in Midland, Texas, Craig Anderson,

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2587 and, you know, the ability to get information, much-needed
2588 information out to the population is so important. And it is
2589 one of the keys, you know, for broadcasting that we need.

2590 Mr. Chapman, from a broadcasting perspective, can you
2591 talk to me about the differences between, you know, the
2592 digital and analog broadcast, and, you know, is it changing?

2593 And again, like my colleagues Mr. Curtis and others have
2594 said, I want to keep an open mind here, but I know for sure
2595 that we need AM radio in this country. And can you talk to
2596 me about digital and analog differences?

2597 *Mr. Chapman. Sure. Thank you, Congressman, for the
2598 question. I will talk real quickly in terms of the
2599 differences with AM, in terms of how it is broadcast.

2600 What we are most familiar with, and what we all listen
2601 to is analog AM. The other end of the spectrum is digital
2602 AM. And the receivers today, very few of them, can receive
2603 all digital.

2604 What we are also familiar with is what is called hybrid,
2605 and that is stations that, in band, deliver both digital and
2606 analog broadcasting. The challenge is, for the hybrid
2607 broadcasting, it is not a reliable system, it is very

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2608 finicky, it is tricky to keep it operating well. But it is
2609 what we chose, as a country, through the Commission, to get
2610 to the digital place that we needed on the AM band.

2611 The station I mentioned earlier in Frederick, Maryland
2612 is broadcasting an all digital. It sounds like a CD. It is
2613 wonderful. But we can't listen to it unless we have the
2614 radio that receives it.

2615 *Mr. Pfluger. It is a great point. So I think, you
2616 know -- I wanted to establish the fact that AM radio is a
2617 national security issue. It is an issue for our Emergency
2618 Management System. The receiver is important in this. When
2619 I listen to KWEL in Midland, Texas, you know, myself and many
2620 other ranchers, farmers, people that are in the oil fields,
2621 they may not have a digital receiver or a hybrid receiver.

2622 So Mr. Schmidt, I recently signed on to a letter, and
2623 upstairs we are having a committee hearing on mandates from
2624 another Federal agency, so I am not a mandate, pro-mandate
2625 kind of a person, but I am very concerned about the lack of
2626 AM radios in vehicles. And I would like to hear, you know,
2627 what your thoughts are on how we continue to allow private
2628 markets to work, but also allow our population to have the

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2629 ability to tune in, because it really is a national security
2630 issue.

2631 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes, thank you for the comment and
2632 question.

2633 Yes, I am -- as I have reiterated, I think our members
2634 are fully and -- committed to providing a plethora of options
2635 and mechanisms through the IPAWS system. AM radio is one of
2636 them.

2637 We also -- our members go through and look at the
2638 consumer demands, consumer listenership, and that folds into
2639 their individual product decisions, which I can't elaborate
2640 on any further.

2641 But it is -- manufacturers now offer a kind of like
2642 dizzying amount of options, and I think that is good. And we
2643 look forward to working with the Federal Government, FEMA,
2644 and the IPAWS in trying to -- strengthening the whole system,
2645 because I do understand and recognize through the various
2646 strategic plans that even FEMA has concerns about AM radio's
2647 future because of the declining listenership. And so we have
2648 to look forward at what we can do to provide the kind of --
2649 the nation with what they need. Thank you.

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2650 *Mr. Pfluger. I would encourage that. It is very
2651 important. This is foundational to our national security and
2652 to getting information out to the populace.

2653 And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

2654 *Mr. Obernolte. The gentleman yields back. We will go
2655 next to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

2656 Mrs. Harshbarger, you are recognized for five minutes.

2657 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you
2658 all for being here today to come to testify.

2659 You know, this just my opinion, but I think taking AM
2660 radios out of a car is a bad decision by automakers. Most of
2661 the people in my district put gas in their cars or gas or
2662 diesel in their trucks, and they don't drive EVs. And a lot
2663 of them have computers that they don't get on very often, and
2664 they don't have smart phones.

2665 And Mr. Schmidt, you know, my question to you is, are
2666 manufacturers considering cutting AM in gas-powered vehicles?
2667 And I say that because I heard something that Mr. Chapman
2668 said earlier, and he alluded to that.

2669 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, as I have mentioned, we are
2670 committed for a full range and plethora of options for

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2671 getting these systems, and individual company decisions on
2672 specific technologies is not something I really can comment
2673 on.

2674 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Okay, that is fine.

2675 Mr. Chapman, you said in your statement earlier most PEP
2676 stations or AM radio stations, because their signals can
2677 cover vast areas, some with the 700-mile coverage radius, and
2678 travel better through solid objects like mountains. I
2679 represent east Tennessee. All we have is mountains. We have
2680 the Great Smoky Mountains. And, you know, FEMA has invested
2681 millions in these stations, and they are battle-hardened and
2682 -- to withstand various national disasters, you say, and
2683 terrorism so we are able to communicate critical information.

2684 You also say that wireless emergency alerts are not as
2685 reliable in these situations, as cell towers can be damaged
2686 and networks are overwhelmed by high call volume.

2687 And Lieutenant Colonel, you talked about some of the
2688 forest fires, severe weather events and forest fires, and,
2689 you know, I represent the Great Smoky Mountains Sevier
2690 County, and we had a wildfire last year that destroyed
2691 numerous homes. And we had a huge -- one of the worst

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2692 disasters in Tennessee in 2016, with the fires in Gatlinburg,
2693 and we lost a lot of lives. And there was -- there were
2694 communication problems. They were overwhelmed. The radio
2695 systems were overwhelmed. And that is why I feel like we
2696 absolutely need to keep the AM radio service as, you know, an
2697 emergency system.

2698 And, you know, I guess we are paying consumers to buy
2699 EVs, which is indirectly a subsidy to automakers. And you
2700 can tell me if you agree with this, but maybe we should think
2701 about removing that tax credit for EVs if they don't have an
2702 AM radio system. But it is an important, incredibly
2703 important thing to keep these avenues open for things like
2704 that.

2705 Lieutenant Colonel, do you have anything to add about
2706 the emergency broadcast systems, and how important they are?

2707 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you for the
2708 opportunity, Congresswoman.

2709 I agree. We have some rural areas in New Jersey,
2710 surprisingly, as much as we might look like a very suburban-
2711 urban state, and the reach of the cellular networks in some
2712 of those areas, particularly in an area where we just had a

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2713 forest fire this past week, was very limited.

2714 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Yes.

2715 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. And the communication
2716 means with those individuals, if they had to evacuate, would
2717 almost primarily have been through the AM radio band --

2718 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Yes.

2719 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. -- to communicate with
2720 those partners.

2721 *Mrs. Harshbarger. Yes, that is the issue. And I have
2722 two distressed counties where, when I said that earlier, it
2723 wasn't to say that we are not a sophisticated district, it is
2724 to say that a lot of people don't have those smartphones, a
2725 lot of people don't use or access computers because we have
2726 the lack of broadband. And so, in my opinion, it is
2727 critically important to keep AM service going.

2728 And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

2729 *Mr. Obernolte. The gentlewoman yields back. We will
2730 go next to the gentleman from Idaho.

2731 Mr. Fulcher, you are recognized for five minutes.

2732 *Mr. Fulcher. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A question for
2733 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise.

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2734 In terms of emergency broadcasting, it is my
2735 understanding that you are deputy state director of emergency
2736 management, and you have also had roles in State Emergency
2737 Response Commission. Would you just share for a moment about
2738 the footprint of AM versus other emergency broadcasting
2739 channels? What percentage of emergency broadcasting would
2740 you say goes currently through AM channels?

2741 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Well, that is a technical
2742 question I don't necessarily have the exact scope and answer
2743 to. I am kind of understanding your meaning --

2744 *Mr. Fulcher. Could you just speak to the level of
2745 dependance that our emergency systems have on AM, versus
2746 other options?

2747 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Yes. In our rural areas,
2748 certainly that percentage of dependance would be much higher
2749 than the cellular networks in that there is areas, believe it
2750 or not, in New Jersey where there is no cellular connectivity
2751 whatsoever.

2752 In many cases, we are seeing a transition throughout our
2753 society where people are not, you know, securing landlines as
2754 much anymore, and relying on cellular networks for their

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2755 communications means.

2756 So to the point of when we have that crisis, and that
2757 emergency happens, and that person is either at their
2758 residence or may be in transition through an area with very
2759 limited cellular connectivity, the AM radio band would be one
2760 of the primary means for us to communicate --

2761 *Mr. Fulcher. Okay, so it is significant. It is a
2762 significant vehicle for communications of emergency.

2763 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Yes, sir.

2764 *Mr. Fulcher. Okay. Mr. Schmidt, there has been a
2765 couple questions that has come your way in this regard. And
2766 I don't know that I really got a good understanding of your
2767 comments on it. Maybe that is on purpose, maybe it is not.
2768 But how is it that not all auto manufacturers are having the
2769 same issues with interference when it comes to emergency
2770 vehicles?

2771 *Mr. Schmidt. Well, interference, you know, my
2772 understanding of interference is dependent on vehicle
2773 architecture, and different -- even within various EVs, those
2774 architectures change. Motors can be in different places, the
2775 electronic devices can be in different places, the receiver

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2776 can be at different places. And space, you know, EMF drops
2777 off rapidly with space. So what may be an issue with one,
2778 that one manufacturer versus another, and the remediation
2779 from one to the other will be somewhat different.

2780 And I really can't comment, since I am not aware of
2781 specific architectures, but I think there are differences in
2782 how vehicle manufacturers are -- or vehicles are constructed,
2783 and the -- kind of levels of EMF and the levels of shielding
2784 needed, and also maybe within the software used to filter the
2785 signals to clean them up. And so --

2786 *Mr. Fulcher. So let me ask you this, because I am
2787 having a hard time just on the technical front -- having just
2788 a little bit of technical background -- with the response
2789 from some that this is a technical issue, that it is just an
2790 interference that, you know, just can't be overcome, or it is
2791 just too cumbersome. We have heard things about the
2792 shielding expense, the weight.

2793 Do you buy into the -- to that? Do you -- or -- you are
2794 a safety person. Is there a safety implication to this?

2795 *Mr. Schmidt. From a safety standpoint, I think it is
2796 very critical, and that is where our commitment comes from,

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2797 is that we are looking at all avenues of the IPAWS to provide
2798 alerts, and our members are committed to doing that. And we
2799 have -- provide many, many ways of getting information out
2800 through our vehicles now. So that is our --

2801 *Mr. Fulcher. So in terms of implementing an AM option,
2802 you are not aware of safety concerns in terms of the actual
2803 implement in the vehicle.

2804 *Mr. Schmidt. No.

2805 *Mr. Fulcher. Mr. Chapman, would you care to address
2806 any of that?

2807 Again, just to reframe my comment, I am struggling with
2808 just this idea that, oh, wait, we have technical obstacles,
2809 we can't get this put in place, but yet some suppliers, some
2810 manufacturers seem to be able to get this handled and some do
2811 not. Can you comment on that?

2812 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, I think that is a fair
2813 question. I am a broadcaster. There are some automakers
2814 that have chosen to figure it out, and other automakers have
2815 not. So other than that, I don't know how to answer it.

2816 You did ask a moment ago about the number of radio
2817 stations. There is roughly 15,000 commercial radio stations

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2818 across the country; 4,500 of those are AM radio stations. To
2819 put it into perspective, you know, the Emergency Alert
2820 System.

2821 *Mr. Fulcher. And thank you for that. I will wrap up
2822 my comments with this, but I think you said a key word in
2823 your answer. You said they have chosen to work this out, and
2824 I think that is exactly right.

2825 I yield back.

2826 *Mr. Obernolte. The gentleman yields back. We will go
2827 next to my colleague from Ohio.

2828 Congressman Johnson, you are recognized for five
2829 minutes.

2830 *Mr. Johnson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me
2831 to waive on to today's hearing.

2832 You know, AM radio reception is an important
2833 communications asset for rural Appalachian areas, including
2834 much of my district in eastern Ohio. Personally, I appear
2835 frequently on AM radio shows as a way to communicate with
2836 constituents in my district. But more importantly, it is a
2837 necessary and critical public safety asset, especially for
2838 remote areas where broadband and even cellular service are

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2839 not always available.

2840 I am pleased that my legislation, H.R. 1353, the ALERT
2841 Parity Act, recently passed the House of Representatives, as
2842 it calls for the establishing of rules through which
2843 providers of emergency connectivity service can provide
2844 access to 911 and emergency alerts in unserved areas.

2845 It is unfathomable for many to understand that there
2846 remains in America remote areas that still lack reliable
2847 cellular service. And removing AM radio receivers from
2848 vehicles in rural America would only compound the issue by
2849 cutting off access to the backbone of our nation's emergency
2850 communications infrastructure in areas that have truly
2851 limited communication options already.

2852 Thank you, Chairman Latta, for holding this important
2853 hearing, and thank you to our witnesses for providing your
2854 valuable insight on this issue today.

2855 Mr. Schmidt, you stated in your testimony that the
2856 Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, or IPAWS, was
2857 designed to provide redundant alert mechanisms to ensure the
2858 public has access to multiple outlets to receive emergency
2859 alerts. As I just mentioned, there are remote areas in my

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2860 district that lack cellular and broadband service. If AM
2861 radio receivers are removed from vehicles, can you please
2862 discuss the options people who live or travel in these remote
2863 areas will have for receiving emergency alerts and public
2864 safety information?

2865 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for that question, and yes, as
2866 you mentioned, from my -- we are committed for looking at
2867 going through the whole range of the IPAWS, because that is a
2868 safety network, as well. And there are things such as
2869 satellite that do have very strong coverage across the
2870 nation, as well.

2871 So each part of that network has pros and cons, and I
2872 think that is why FEMA is looking to try to diversify it and
2873 even modernize it, because I think, again, I think our view
2874 is we are technology-forward, and we are trying to look at
2875 how to address some of the issues that FEMA has already
2876 identified with AM, and how to move it forward for the
2877 future.

2878 *Mr. Johnson. Well, let me expand on that question.
2879 Let me ask it a different way.

2880 So no cellular, no broadband, it seems to me like in

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2881 many areas of the country -- and if we take AM out -- the
2882 only available communication that many people will have in
2883 rural areas is satellite, correct?

2884 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes.

2885 *Mr. Johnson. Okay, all right.

2886 Well, Mr. Chapman, as you know, broadcasters stepped up
2887 during the COVID pandemic to continue providing local
2888 communities with fact-based journalism, breaking news, and
2889 support for local businesses. What was the role of AM radio
2890 in this type of coverage?

2891 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, thank you for the question.

2892 One of the things that we did early on, we did
2893 fundraisers for local businesses. This is as small-town as
2894 it gets. We opened up the mikes, and we started selling
2895 business cards for those businesses. And that money all went
2896 to those local businesses. That is one way that radio steps
2897 up.

2898 Another way is the increased investment that we have
2899 made in our news operation. Towns like Anderson, Indiana
2900 have been through a lot. They need somebody to help them
2901 understand complex issues. When we up our news department on

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2902 WHBU, it means that we are having more people to deal with
2903 those issues, to have it on the radio so the community can
2904 have a better understanding.

2905 *Mr. Johnson. Okay.

2906 *Mr. Chapman. It is the same thing we have done with
2907 reprogramming one of our stations, it is to help the
2908 community understand.

2909 *Mr. Johnson. Okay. In your view, then, are there
2910 benefits of AM radio for rural communities that cannot be
2911 provided through other means?

2912 *Mr. Chapman. Absolutely. We have those two examples I
2913 just shared with you.

2914 *Mr. Johnson. Okay, all right.

2915 Mr. Chairman, I yield back an entire 21 seconds.

2916 *Mr. Obernolte. I thank the gentleman for yielding
2917 back. It looks like I am batting cleanup, so I will
2918 recognize myself for five minutes.

2919 I want to thank you for your testimony today. You have
2920 done a really good job of illustrating why AM radio is so
2921 important, Mr. Chapman. I found your testimony about the
2922 incident with your family and the train derailment to be very

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2923 poignant.

2924 But I want to echo the comments of several of my
2925 colleagues, most recently Congressman Pfluger, in saying that
2926 normally I am not a big fan of government mandates. You
2927 know, I think that consumers are generally very intelligent
2928 about deciding what they are willing to pay for and why, as
2929 long as it is explained to them. So the question that we are
2930 debating today is whether or not the Department of
2931 Transportation should be empowered to mandate that an AM
2932 radio be part of every new car sold. So I want to direct a
2933 couple of my questions to getting to the heart of that.

2934 Mr. Schmidt, do you know about how much an inclusion of
2935 an AM radio adds to the cost of a car?

2936 *Mr. Schmidt. Thank you for the question. As I
2937 mentioned -- I think before you came in -- that is
2938 information that I don't have a firm grasp on. That is
2939 individual for each manufacturer and their individual systems
2940 and what kind of remediation levels they need to provide on
2941 it.

2942 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay. So, I mean, I think it is fair
2943 to say it is probably not a dollar. It is probably, I don't

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2944 know, in the \$100 range, something like that. Does that
2945 sound fair?

2946 *Mr. Schmidt. I really don't know, because I don't --

2947 *Mr. Obernolte. I am just guessing, because I know it
2948 is not -- it is more than just the equipment. There is an
2949 antenna, and AM radio antennas have to be quite long, and
2950 installed in the car.

2951 So, I mean, let's just say it is in that range of that
2952 figure. And without arguing one side or another, how would
2953 you articulate the argument to a consumer who says, "Look,
2954 that is \$100 of my money, I don't want an AM radio. I have
2955 got other means of getting emergency information, so, you
2956 know, why are you forcing me, you know, Department of
2957 Transportation, to pay \$100 or more for this equipment that I
2958 don't want?"`

2959 *Mr. Schmidt. Was that addressed to me? I am sorry.

2960 *Mr. Obernolte. Sure. Well, no, I mean, it is a
2961 hypothetical conversation with a consumer who is saying, you
2962 know, to you, "I don't want to be forced to pay \$100 for
2963 equipment that I don't want and won't use."`

2964 *Mr. Schmidt. Yes, I think our position is that we

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2965 think mandates are a blunt instrument, and especially for a
2966 technology that, as FEMA has said, is -- has some declining
2967 listenership.

2968 And so I think, you know, again, I am -- think it is
2969 important for the consumers to understand and make those
2970 decisions.

2971 *Mr. Obernolte. Okay, fair enough.

2972 Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise, I really enjoyed your
2973 testimony. And one of the things that stuck with me is the
2974 statistic that you cited that a third of AM radio listeners
2975 are 60 years of age or older. And I think that that sounds
2976 about right. In fact, it might be, in my experience, might
2977 be a little low.

2978 One concern that I have, though, is that in modern cars
2979 the AM radio system is buried so far in the user interface, I
2980 question whether or not consumers can even find it. So if I
2981 put my mother in my car that is just -- it is all touch
2982 screen, and it is -- you know, it -- and I asked her to tune
2983 in on an AM radio station, I am not sure she could do it.
2984 What do you think about that?

2985 *Lieutenant Colonel DeMaise. Thank you, Congressman,

This is an unedited transcript. The statements within may be inaccurate, incomplete, or misattributed to the speaker.

2986 that is a very interesting point, and I think it goes down to
2987 the preparedness component of emergency management.

2988 We want people to exercise their plan, so to speak,
2989 whatever that plan might be in a crisis, make sure that they
2990 know what works. The time to sort out where those things are
2991 isn't in the middle of the storm, it is prior to. And while
2992 it may take some education and outreach associated with
2993 achieving that goal, it is a worthwhile endeavor.

2994 *Mr. Obernolte. Right, I completely agree with you.

2995 Mr. Chapman, you know, your testimony was very moving to
2996 me about the experience that you had with the train
2997 derailment. You mentioned that getting the information that
2998 you got over the radio, that was the only solution at the
2999 time because cell phones at the time were not capable of
3000 delivering that information. But now they are. So -- and
3001 they do it in a way that is fundamentally different from
3002 radio, which is, you know, a one-directional stream of
3003 information, whereas the cell phone, you could say, "Hey,
3004 what just happened, what is that glow," and it can answer
3005 you.

3006 So why would does -- you know, as technology changes, as

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3007 the way cars are equipped is changing, why should our method
3008 of delivery for this emergency information not change with
3009 it?

3010 *Mr. Chapman. Congressman, thank you. I think it is a
3011 fair question.

3012 We have evolved the FEMA mechanisms from Conrail early
3013 on, 50 years ago, to our current form of alerts. It is
3014 important that we recognize how to evolve things. But at the
3015 same time, we can't stop and make a hard no, and say that we
3016 are no longer going to access a significant portion of the
3017 population, which this would do right now. It is important
3018 to look at innovation, but we don't have a ready fix to do at
3019 this point in time with the removal of AM from the EAS
3020 system.

3021 *Mr. Obernolte. Right. Well, I want to thank you very
3022 much for -- everyone, for their testimony. We have no
3023 questioners left here in the room.

3024 So I ask unanimous consent to insert in the record the
3025 documents included on the staff hearing documents list.

3026 Without objection, that will be the order.

3027 [The information follows:]

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3028

3029 *****COMMITTEE INSERT*****

3030

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3031 *Mr. Obernolte. And seeing no further members to be
3032 recognized, thank you very much for your testimony and for
3033 your willingness to be here today to educate all of us on
3034 this important issue.

3035 There being no further business before the subcommittee,
3036 I -- oh, okay, I remind members that they have 10 business
3037 days to submit questions for the record. I ask the witnesses
3038 to respond to the questions promptly, and I know you will.
3039 Members should submit their questions by the close of
3040 business on Tuesday, June the 20th.

3041 Without objection, the subcommittee is now adjourned.

3042 [Whereupon, at 12:43 p.m., the subcommittee was
3043 adjourned.]