



**Hearing on  
“FEMA Reauthorization: Ensuring the Nation is Prepared”**

**United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

***Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public  
Buildings, and Emergency Management***

**October 2, 2013**

**Statement of Barry Fisher**

**On behalf of the  
National Association of Broadcasters**

Good morning, Chairman Barletta, Ranking Member Carson, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Barry Fisher. I am the General Manager of WFMZ-TV in Allentown, Pennsylvania, with service area coverage of the Lehigh Valley and Berks County. WFMZ is a community-oriented, independent television station, with 83 news broadcasts each week, and we also operate a 24-hour digital weather channel.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My testimony will address the valuable, often life-saving services that all broadcasters -- both television and radio stations -- provide during natural disasters and other crises. In particular, I will discuss broadcasters' indispensable role as the backbone of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and our interest in the continued roll-out of the Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS). I am pleased to share with you my views on how to improve our nation's emergency communications system in the digital age, and how reauthorization of FEMA may advance that goal.

## **I. Broadcasting Is the Most Important Source for Critical, Life-Saving Emergency Information for All Americans**

Broadcasters' commitment to public service is never more apparent than during times of crisis. During an emergency -- particularly one that arises with little notice -- no other industry can match the ability of full power broadcasting to deliver comprehensive, up-to-date warnings and information to affected citizens.<sup>1</sup> Local television broadcasters reach 96.4% of the approximate 120.2 million households in the U.S.,<sup>2</sup> while local radio reaches an audience of more than 242.5 million Americans, or 92% of the population (ages 12+), on a weekly basis.<sup>3</sup> The wide signal coverage of broadcasters ensures that anyone in a car, at home or even walking around with a mobile device can receive up-

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<sup>1</sup> "Broadcast radio receivers are ubiquitous. . . In the aftermath of a national, catastrophic event, alerting authorities can leverage operational area capabilities to transmit crucial information to the public through as many methods as possible. However, broadcast radio may be the most effective method since it is possible that terrestrial Internet Protocol (IP) networks and other pathways could be inoperable. . . ." *An Emergency Alert System Best Practices Guide – Version 1.0*, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, at 3, available at [http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_best\\_practices\\_guide.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/ipaws/eas_best_practices_guide.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Nielsen, Universe Estimates, as of August 26, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Arbitron Radar, June 2013, <http://arbitron.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=43&item=885>.

to-the-minute alerts when disaster strikes. As a ubiquitous medium, broadcasters understand and appreciate their unique role in disseminating emergency information. Radio and television broadcasters are first informers during an emergency, and Americans know to turn to their local broadcasters first for in-depth coverage.

Radio and television stations are also our nation's most reliable network for distributing emergency information. Even if the electricity is out, causing the Internet and cable television to go down, and phone service is lost because networks are clogged or cell towers or phone lines are down, over-the-air broadcasters can remain on the air and received by battery-operated radios and televisions. For example, during Hurricane Sandy, approximately 25 percent of cell phone towers in the New York-New Jersey area failed, while virtually all radio and television stations were able to provide uninterrupted service.

Local radio and television stations have dedicated news and weather personnel who use their familiarity with the people and geography of their local communities to provide the most useful, informative news to their audiences, whether that includes information on where to shelter-in-place, which streets will serve as evacuation routes, or where local businesses may find fuel or generators.

Indeed, even with the recent, welcomed introduction of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) by the cellular industry, local radio and television stations remain the primary source for news and information regarding emergency situations. As a text-based message, WEA's are limited to no more than 90 characters. As a result, WEAs typically provide only the most rudimentary, bell-ringing data. Given that limitation, although WEAs are a welcomed development, this new EAS outlet only underscores the importance of broadcasters during times of emergency, as virtually all WEAs instruct citizens to "check local media" for further information regarding an emergency,<sup>4</sup> such as

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<sup>4</sup> Broadcasters are also rolling-out Mobile EAS (M-EAS), which is a next-generation approach to public warnings that leverages the backbone of Mobile Digital TV transmissions. M-EAS utilizes terrestrial broadcasting rather than cellular network connectivity, which allows highly reliable message dissemination, even when cellular networks are down. M-EAS also enables rich

the path of a storm, shelter-in-place instructions, or where to locate assistance. Broadcasters are pleased to serve as the chief source for essential emergency information for all Americans, including wireless telephone subscribers.

Broadcasters deliver emergency information with passion, during times of crisis both large and small. For instance, WFMZ's coverage area includes several rivers that have experienced dangerous flooding in recent years. Viewers who live on the banks of these rivers rely on our news coverage to know if and when to evacuate. WFMZ also operates the 69 News AccuWeather Channel on digital channel 69.2, which provides continuous weather information, including up-to-the-minute updates on river flood stages. WFMZ routinely receives feedback from viewers about the comfort they enjoy in knowing that WFMZ is monitoring and reporting on the status of these rivers.

On a larger scale, broadcasters' commitment to emergency information was never more apparent than during Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. Overall, 147 fatalities were attributed to Sandy, with losses in the United States ranging from \$50 billion to \$71 billion. Fortunately, as the storm approached, radio and television stations in the path, including WFMZ, mobilized their staff and facilities, or the damage could have been even worse.

WFMZ provided round-the-clock coverage to keep our viewers informed on what to expect from the storm. Specifically, given the experience and expertise of our meteorologists and other local news reporters, we anticipated widespread power and communications outages. We repeatedly reminded viewers ahead of the storm of the many ways they can receive news about the storm, including a battery-operated television. This guidance was particularly appreciated by viewers in the counties we cover where an estimated 67 percent of residents lost power.

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multimedia alerts (e.g., video, audio, text, and graphics) to mobile DTV-equipped cellphones, tablets, laptops, netbooks, and in-car navigation systems. M-EAS is compliant with Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) and designed for full incorporation into the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). See <http://mobileeas.org/>.

We also took advance precautions to ensure our ability to provide continuous service during the storm. For example, WFMZ pre-positioned news crews throughout the region so they could provide live, on-the-scene news without excessive travel, which was extremely dangerous and cumbersome during the storm. We also made sure that station personnel were equipped to deal with any possible obstacles that might limit access to our facilities. In fact, some staff even had to use chain saws to remove debris to clear a path to WFMZ's studio. Station management also ensured that we had an ample fuel supply to run our station on generator power for several days. The station, in fact, ran on our emergency generator for five days after losing power just hours into the storm. To maintain the flow of information to our local citizens, we partnered with local radio stations to simulcast our news coverage to reach people without battery-operated televisions, and streamed our newscast coverage online via Syncbak, which is an app for smartphones that allowed the few people who maintained wireless service to watch our news coverage in addition to web-based streaming.

Similar life-saving steps were also undertaken by other local broadcasters in the region. At the FCC's field hearing on Hurricane Sandy in February 2013, Dave Davis of New York City-based WABC-TV described his station's efforts:

As our news department worked to gather the latest information... our engineering department made sure our own infrastructure was prepared... testing and tuning up all the generators, topping off fuel tanks, inspecting and securing rooftop and tower antenna installations, installing additional receive systems at the station, and testing backup transmission paths. We knew our life-saving information would not save lives unless we stayed on the air.<sup>5</sup>

These kinds of measures were typical of broadcasters, and proved extremely important as the storm knocked out other means of communication in parts of the tri-state area for

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<sup>5</sup> Statement of Dave Davis, President and General Manager, WABC-TV, New York, & Vice Chairman, New York State Broadcasters Association, Inc., FCC, Field Hearing on Super Storm Sandy (Feb. 3, 2013), at 1-2.

almost a full week, including one-quarter of the cell phone towers in the storm zone.<sup>6</sup> As a result, all television stations and virtually all radio stations were able to remain on the air during the storm.<sup>7</sup> Even FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate recognized the critical importance of broadcasters, urging the 50 million people in the storm area to get a battery-powered or hand cranked radio before the storm to ensure reliable access to local news and weather updates in the event of power, Internet and cell tower outages.<sup>8</sup>

During and after the storm, many local broadcasters provided round-the-clock coverage, including WTNH in New Haven, Connecticut, which stayed on the air for over 40 hours with live, on-the-scene coverage in a 54-hour period, including one stretch of 28 ½ hours straight. WTNH reminded citizens to stock their homes with batteries and other essentials, and made sure to inform viewers that the station would live-stream all of its coverage during the storm. Similarly, WPRI in Providence, Rhode Island, provided critical information regarding evacuations, Red Cross and United Way and other information both on the air and on a dedicated web page it specifically created for Hurricane Sandy.

Many other radio and television stations along the northeast coast stayed on the air continuously for several days, providing life-saving information and a megaphone for public safety officials to announce evacuation, shelter-in-place, and other instructions.<sup>9</sup>

Local broadcasters also formed partnerships with other outlets to reach as many citizens as possible, including music and sports radio stations that simulcast storm

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<sup>6</sup> Brian X. Chen, *Cellphone Users Steaming at Hit-or-Miss Service*, New York Times (Nov. 2, 2012), available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/03/technology/cellphone-users-steaming-at-hit-or-miss-service.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/03/technology/cellphone-users-steaming-at-hit-or-miss-service.html?_r=0).

<sup>7</sup> “Batteries are drained, Internet connections long-gone. For the nearly 5 million households muddling through a fourth day without power in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, there's really only one medium that matters, and that's radio.” Michael Learmonth, *Sandy Brings Back Prime Time for Original Wireless Network: Radio*, Ad Age (Nov. 2, 2012), available at <http://adage.com/article/media/hurricane-sandy-brings-prime-time-radio/238114/>.

<sup>8</sup> CBS Morning News (Oct. 29, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> New Jersey stations WSUS and WNNJ aired an interview with New Jersey Assemblyman Gary Chiusano in which the state government announced its plan for rationing gasoline. Statement of John Hogan, Chairman and CEO, Media and Entertainment, Clear Channel Communications, Inc., FCC Hearing on Hurricane Sandy (Feb. 5, 2013) at 9.

coverage provided by news-oriented radio stations, and television stations that simulcast their news over radio. Local broadcasters are competitors, but when disaster strikes, we work together to remain on the air and expand coverage. During times of crisis, it is a routine matter for broadcast engineers to help competing stations stay on the air.

Although the Internet was down for many in the storm zone, local broadcasters also leveraged digital outlets and social media to expand their reach to those who were able to maintain Internet access, such as WFMZ's arrangement with the online television service Syncbak. WFMZ, like most stations, also transmitted storm coverage 24/7 on their websites and social platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Page views of radio and television stations' websites were up by a factor of two to three times during the storm, presumably by many viewers outside the storm zone. Unlike other communications outlets, local broadcasters invest in journalism and employ experienced reporters. Citizens know that their local radio or television station is the best place to turn for reliable, accurate information during emergencies.

Following the storm, local broadcasters also took a leading role in helping to rebuild the impacted areas, from major telethons like the 12-12-12 (A Concert for Sandy Relief) that was carried nationwide on Clear Channel radio stations, to programs like "Operation Brotherly Love: Sandy's Aftermath," a joint effort of CBS Television's Philadelphia stations which raised substantial funds for the Red Cross Hurricane Sandy Response Fund. Radio and television stations are uniquely positioned to organize and publicize fundraising relief efforts, and they take pride in their ability to do so.

Local stations also offer hyper local weather alerts and information on multicast channels, such as WFMZ's 69 News Accuweather Channel on digital channel 69.2, which provides continuous coverage of local, regional and national weather conditions. TV stations are also in the process of rolling out innovative mobile DTV services, which will enable viewers to receive live, local broadcast television programming—including local news, weather, sports, emergency information, and entertainment programming—

on an “on the go” basis on mobile-DTV capable devices such as smart phones, laptop computers and tablets. Hundreds of stations around the country have commenced offering mobile DTV service, and hundreds of other stations have announced plans to continue the nationwide roll-out of mobile DTV in the near-term. Mobile DTV is a reliable and spectrally efficient (one-to-an-unlimited-number) means of disseminating emergency information to viewers. Following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan, residents reported that the country’s mobile television service was a lifeline source of information, particularly in the wake of cellular network and power outages.<sup>10</sup>

In times of local crisis such as these, broadcasters provide outstanding service to their communities. Beyond anecdotal evidence, the importance of broadcasters during the storm is also borne out by statistics. For example, according to Arbitron, radio listening jumped 70 percent in New York City, 245 percent in Nassau/Suffolk, and 42 percent in Staten Island, during Hurricane Sandy. Similarly, following tornadoes that struck in Alabama in April 2011, Raycom Media conducted a survey of residents who were impacted. According to the survey results, a vast majority – 71% of adults – said they were warned about the storm by watching television.<sup>11</sup> An additional 10% of those surveyed learned of the tornadoes via radio. A mere 6% of respondents learned of the tornadoes through Internet, smartphones, or Twitter/Facebook.<sup>12</sup> This occurred despite the fact that 75% of those interviewed were at home during the tornadoes, presumably with access to the Internet and other sources of information.<sup>13</sup> This reliance on radio and television for dependable, up-to-the-minute information was true even for young citizens ages 18 to 24. We might expect this demographic to rely more on the Internet

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Michael Plugh, “What I Left Behind In Japan,” *Salon.com* (March 22, 2011), available at [http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/03/22/japan\\_i\\_left\\_behind/index.html](http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/03/22/japan_i_left_behind/index.html). See also Live Blog: Japan Earthquake, *The Wall Street Journal* (March 11, 2011, 8:06 a.m. posting of Chester Dawson) (“Unable to use cell phones, many used their smartphones to tune into television broadcasts and find out what had happened. ‘It’s very convenient being able to watch live TV when the phones are down,’ said Minoru Naito, an employee of Royal Bank of Scotland in Tokyo. ‘Otherwise, we’d have no idea what is going on.’”).

<sup>11</sup> Alabama Tornado Survey, Billy McDowell, VP of Media Research, RAYCOM Media (May 2011).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

and social media for information, but fully 77% of them reported that they tracked the storms via radio or TV.

## **II. Local Broadcast Stations Are the Backbone of the Nation's Emergency Alert System**

In addition to the ongoing, comprehensive coverage that broadcasters provide during emergencies, we are also the backbone of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). EAS is a largely wireless network that connects over-the-air radio, television and cable television systems. The in-place infrastructure of EAS allows the prompt dissemination of alerts to the widest possible audience, or to target alerts to specific areas, as appropriate. EAS is intended for use during sudden, unpredictable or unforeseen events that pose an immediate threat to public health or safety, the nature of which precludes any advance notification or warning.

EAS was put into place on January 1, 1997, when it superseded the Emergency Broadcast System, which itself superseded the Control of Electromagnetic Radiation System (CONELRAD). In addition to alerting the public of local weather emergencies such as tornadoes and flash floods, EAS is designed to allow the President to speak to the United States within 10 minutes, although the nationwide federal EAS has never been intentionally activated, aside from the November 9, 2011, nationwide test discussed below. The EAS regulations are governed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and EAS is jointly coordinated by the FCC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the National Weather Service (NOAA/NWS).

EAS is used via radio, television, and cable television. Sirius XM has been required to participate in EAS since 2006, and satellite television providers have been required to participate since 2007.

Messages in EAS are composed of four parts: a digitally encoded Specific Area Messaging Encoding (SAME) header, an attention signal, an audio announcement, and an end-of-message signal. The SAME header contains information such as who originated the alert, a brief description of the event, the areas affected, the expected duration of the event, and the date and time it was issued.

FEMA has designated and hardened certain radio stations as Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations, which are responsible for distributing presidential messages to other broadcast stations and cable systems. FEMA is in the process of modernizing and expanding the PEP system to include approximately 77 stations. This has been an arduous, long-term task, and broadcasters support FEMA's persistence to accomplishing this tremendous goal. We would encourage reauthorization and continued funding of FEMA to enable it to complete this project.

All EAS Participants, including broadcasters, are required to maintain FCC-certified encoder/decoder EAS equipment points that continuously monitor the signals of at least two nearby broadcast stations for EAS messages, one of which must be designated a local primary station, which is the first link to EAS message originators. Broadcasters typically work in partnership with state, county and local emergency managers and public safety officials on how best to deploy EAS in each state.

Although EAS can be triggered by the President, and state or local authorities under certain conditions, the majority of alerts are originated by local emergency managers and the NWS.

The specific content of EAS messages can vary depending on the nature of the emergency, but may include information on the timing and path of storms, evacuation plans and routes, shelter-in-place instructions, and America's Missing: Broadcasting Emergency Response Alerts, or Child Abduction AMBER Alerts, which help expand the eyes and ears of local law enforcement when a child is abducted. Nationwide, since the inception of AMBER in 1996, AMBER alerts have helped safely recover more than 656 abducted children.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the Amber Plan was originally created by broadcasters with the assistance of law enforcement agencies in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

EAS participation is an important component of broadcasters' public service. All EAS equipment is purchased by broadcasters at their own expense. All stations must test

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.amberalert.gov/statistics.htm> (last visited Sep. 27, 2013).

their EAS systems on both a weekly and monthly basis. We have all seen or heard the familiar announcement: “The following is a test of the Emergency Alert System. This is only a test.”

The FCC and FEMA conducted the first nationwide test of the EAS system on November 9, 2011. The broadcast industry fully supported this endeavor and lent our resources to the project. We worked closely with our federal and local partners to ensure that the national test was useful and informative. Broadcasters prepared for the national exercise by reviewing their internal EAS equipment and processes, and if appropriate, upgrading software or hardware in advance of the national test. Broadcasters also conducted an extensive nationwide awareness campaign in the days leading up to the test, to ensure that Americans understood that it was “only a test.” The test was discussed on numerous high-profile newscasts and morning shows and repeatedly covered on radio talk shows. The broadcasting industry also created and distributed a variety of English and foreign language Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that were aired thousands of times as the test approached.

The goal of the test was to diagnose the efficiency and reliability of a nationwide EAS alert, and identify areas in need of potential improvement. In my view, the test was a success. It was the first time an official “live-code” national alert message was purposely deployed end-to-end throughout the system, under conditions simulating an actual emergency situation. Almost all broadcasters, including my station and virtually all broadcasters in Pennsylvania, were able to successfully rebroadcast the EAS test message they monitored and received, despite certain technical problems with the origination of the message which have now been addressed, including the need to improve the audio quality.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> These problems included: (1) a “loop-back” of the digital message header codes emanating from one of the PEP stations that caused the test message initiating codes to repeat about every six seconds, which led some EAS equipment to seize upon receiving the second set of header tones; (2) FEMA’s originating equipment had a clock error which caused some equipment to delay pass-through of the message by three minutes; and (3) a few scattered problems with reception of the test message through the PEP network of radio stations.

Broadcasters also support the FCC's ongoing review of the lessons learned during the nationwide EAS test. The FCC recently issued a Public Notice seeking comment from the public on issues that arose during the test, with a presumed eye towards launching a rulemaking proceeding in the near term.<sup>16</sup> Broadcasters appreciate the Commission's intent to further examine certain testing areas, and look forward to future nationwide testing that will help ensure the reliability of EAS. EAS is tested weekly by each radio and TV station and monthly within each state. Such tests allow message disseminators to confirm that their equipment is working properly, or to diagnose and fix any problems. We believe that there should be regular testing of the federal government's ability to send an alert message throughout the nation.

Although a success, the nationwide test highlighted the need for a redundant transmission architecture that does not rely solely on the PEP network. To some degree, this is being addressed with the recent transition to the new digital-based CAP and FEMA's use of the Internet as the backbone of IPAWS.

In June 2006, President Bush issued Executive Order 13407, entitled *Public Alert and Warning System*, which states:

It is the policy of the United States to have an effective, reliable, integrated, flexible, and comprehensive system to alert and warn the American people...establish or adopt, as appropriate, common alerting and warning protocols, standards, terminology, and operating procedures for the public alert and warning system to enable interoperability and the secure delivery of coordinated messages to the American people through as many communication pathways as practicable...administer the Emergency Alert System (EAS) as a critical component...ensure that under all conditions the President of the United States can alert and warn the American people.

In response, FEMA has developed the IPAWS Program that is designed to improve public safety through the rapid dissemination of emergency messages to as many people as possible over as many communications devices as possible.

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<sup>16</sup> Public Notice, *Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Seek Comment Regarding Equipment and Operational Issues Identified Following the First Nationwide Test of the Emergency Alert System*, DA 13-1969 (rel. Sep. 23, 2013).

The transition to the digital CAP system has also raised the specter of cyber hacking that could disrupt EAS. For example, on February 12, 2013, a hacker was able to access the EAS equipment of a handful of stations in Montana and elsewhere, causing those stations to issue a false EAS alert concerning an attack by zombies. It is my understanding that the hacking was limited to a few isolated instances where individual stations neglected to reset the factory-set, default passwords on their new CAP-compliant EAS equipment and did not have adequate firewall protections on their networks. The breach did not occur at the message origination level, so there was no danger of a widespread false message. Broadcasters take cyber security very seriously, and this hacking situation was an excellent reminder for all EAS participants to double-check the security of their EAS equipment and their IT networks. The National Association of Broadcasters regularly reminds its members of best practices for security for the EAS and all station functions.

In my view, the continued success of EAS will largely turn on the expertise and ability of local authorities to fully deploy EAS and act as a “civil authority” with full access to the system. In the past, some of the isolated instances where EAS could have been used more judiciously directly resulted from a lack of awareness or expertise on the part of local officials concerning EAS. In this day and age, it is unacceptable that some local emergency managers remain unaware of the benefits of EAS, or how and when to trigger an EAS alert. Broadcasters would encourage the Committee to support FEMA’s ongoing efforts to train state and local authorities on the proper use of EAS as it considers reauthorization of FEMA.

In Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters (PAB), in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), has addressed this need via our use of The Emergency Management Network (EMnet). EMnet is a closed-loop system in which radio and TV stations have a dedicated terminal that delivers EAS warnings to stations and allows two-way communications between stations and PEMA officials. PEMA also provided EMnet terminals to local county Emergency Management

Agencies along with the necessary training to properly use the system. EMnet is a robust method of disseminating EAS information directly to stations in a “Hub and Spoke” approach in addition to the legacy “Daisy Chain” system. The two-way communications feature can help stations clarify important emergency information in a very timely fashion if required.

In the same vein, as mentioned above, FEMA is in the midst of implementing a next generation of EAS, although this effort is largely complete concerning broadcasters. This new system will modernize the technology used to deliver EAS messages from public safety officials to EAS Participants. Under the Commission’s existing rules, broadcasters and other EAS Participants are required to process an EAS message that is formatted in this new “language,” known CAP.<sup>17</sup>

Pursuant to FCC rules, EAS Participants have installed equipment capable of receiving a CAP-formatted message, at their own expense.<sup>18</sup> This was a substantial burden for many broadcasters. It is critical that our effort be matched by a commensurate investment of state and local jurisdictions, to ensure that their EAS equipment is able to both receive and transmit a CAP-formatted message.<sup>19</sup> This will ensure that the public will benefit from the next-generation of public alerting.

Third, authority for EAS is spread across multiple federal agencies with differing priorities, while the primary use of the system is by state and local officials. At present, there is no mechanism for the users of the system and the distributors of the messages to come together to discuss issues and work out problems. I respectfully request the

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<sup>17</sup> CAP is a messaging structure that allows emergency managers to provide in a digital format (protocol) detailed descriptions of an emergency event. It is an open, interoperable standard. See *Second Report and Order*, 22 FCC Rcd. 13285 ¶¶ 22-25 (2007). CAP is also backwards-compatible to work with EAS and the NWS’ SAME (Specific Area Message Encoding) protocol. *Id.* at ¶ 5.

<sup>18</sup> See, In the Matter of Review of the Emergency Alert System; Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association, the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, Inc., and the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, Petition for Immediate Relief, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, EB Docket No. 04-296, rel. May 26, 2011.

Committee to consider adopting language creating a national EAS working group or advisory committee, and direct it to meet on a regular basis and report back to this and other committees of jurisdiction, to ensure that the lines of communication remain open and that ideas for continuous improvement of the system have a forum in which they can be heard.

One other critical improvement can be achieved without expenditure of any funds. Specifically, broadcasters need credentialing from state and local authorities to allow them to access their facilities, such as studios and transmitter sites, during times of emergency. This will enable radio and television stations to repair or maintain their equipment and fully leverage their resources, local knowledge and training to keep the public informed during emergencies. While certain states accommodate broadcasters who need to access their facilities, such cooperation is not universal. Congressional action in this area could greatly enhance our ability to maintain operations and deliver vital information to our audiences.

A properly working EAS is a fundamental and essential component of our nation's Homeland Security, and is crucially needed in our state of Pennsylvania to respond to the myriad of potential man-made and weather-related threats facing our region. As mentioned, for example, my station's coverage area includes several rivers that sometimes cause dangerous flooding. Pennsylvania is also home to multiple nuclear power plants, defense contractors and military installations, shipping ports, busy railways, and numerous major trucking routes. As a large state, Pennsylvania also experiences a variety of dangerous weather conditions, including tornados, hazardous snow storms, and other emergencies.

I am grateful to Chairman Barletta and this Committee for hosting this hearing and for your interest in improving our communications to prevent the loss of life and property in the future. Disasters are bound to happen, despite our best intentions and preparation. We must take care not to overlook this opportunity to improve public warning and emergency communications in advance of the next event, instead of during its

aftermath. We should be planning for the next emergency, not preparing for the last one.

Thank you.