

The Emergency Alert System (EAS)

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system that requires TV and radio broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service (SDARS) providers, direct broadcast satellite (DBS) service providers, and wireline video service providers to offer to the President the communications capability to address the American public during a national emergency. The system also may be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information such as AMBER (missing children) alerts and emergency weather information targeted to a specific area.

How the EAS Works

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service (NWS), implement the EAS at the national level. Only the President determines when the EAS will be activated at the national level, and has delegated the administration of this function to FEMA. Accordingly, FEMA activates the national EAS, and directs national EAS tests and exercises. The NWS uses the EAS on a local and statewide basis to provide the public with alerts and warnings regarding dangerous weather and other emergency conditions.

The FCC's role includes prescribing rules that establish technical standards for the EAS, procedures for EAS participants to follow in the event the EAS is activated, and EAS testing protocols. Additionally, the FCC ensures that state and local EAS plans developed by industry conform to the FCC's EAS rules and regulations. The FCC's goal is to make the EAS capable of distributing emergency information as quickly as possible to as many people as possible.

How the EAS Works (cont'd.)

The EAS allows participating providers to send and receive emergency information quickly and automatically, even if their facilities are unattended. If one link in the system for spreading emergency alert information is broken, members of the public have multiple alternate sources of warning. EAS equipment also provides a method for automatic interruption of regular programming, and in certain instances is able to relay emergency messages in languages other than English.

Along with its capability of providing an emergency message to the entire nation simultaneously, the EAS allows authorized state and local authorities to quickly distribute important local emergency information. A state emergency manager can use the EAS to broadcast a warning from one or more major radio stations in a particular state. EAS equipment in other radio and television stations, as well as in cable television systems in that state, can automatically monitor and rebroadcast the warning. Additionally, EAS equipment can directly monitor the NWS for local weather and other emergency alerts, which local broadcast stations, cable systems, and other EAS participants can then rebroadcast, providing an almost immediate relay of local emergency messages to the public.

(More)



Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you believe EAS rules and procedures are not being followed, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

What to Include in Your Complaint

The best way to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line complaint form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

What to Include in Your Complaint (cont'd.)

- your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number where you can be reached;
- the name and phone number of the company that you are complaining about and location (city and state) if the company is a cable or satellite operator;
- television station call sign (WZUE), TV channel (13), and location (city and state), if applicable;
- date, time, and description of problem.

For More Information

For more information about EAS, visit the FCC's EAS Web page at www.fcc.gov/pshs/services/eas/. For more information about AMBER Alerts, see our consumer fact sheet at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/AMBERPlan.html. Finally, for information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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For this or any other consumer publication in an alternative format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio), please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This fact sheet is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

10/16/08*



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