

Assessing Results of the Nationwide EAS Test - More Forms, Calls for Internet Alerts

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November 13, 2011

Now that we've completed last week's **first-ever Nationwide test of the EAS system**, designed to alert Americans in the event of an emergency, the FCC is in the process of collecting information about the successes and failures of the test, through the submissions of participants. Forms reporting on the results of the test are due by **December 27**. At the same time, there has been at least one Congressional call for an expansion of the system in order to provide alerts not only by broadcast, cable and direct broadcast satellite systems, but also through **on-line social networking communications tools**.

According to press reports (see, e.g. [this article](#) from the NY Times), the nationwide test uncovered many shortcomings in the system, as many broadcast stations (including all stations in two states) never received the alerts from the station that they were monitoring, in some cases because the message was never delivered to primary stations which were supposed to start the relay of the message to other stations along the daisy-chain system that is supposed to be in place. Cable and satellite also had many problems. Despite the fact that there may have been issues at your station or in your area, all participants should report on how their facilities fared in the test. The FCC will take this information to assess what needs to be done to repair the problems that were witnesses. The necessary Forms to report on the results of the test [are available on the FCC's website](#). In adopting the rules for the test, the FCC stated that it was not intending that the reporting system be a way to punish stations whose facilities did not receive or transmit the test, but instead to be a diagnostic tool to determine whether or not the system worked. So the failure to file the forms to report on the success of the test on your stations is much more likely to bring an FCC enforcement action against your station than is reporting that, for one reason or another, the test did not work. These forms are due on **December 27**.

Even before the test was conducted, **Maine Senator Susan Collins** [issued a statement](#) calling for FEMA (the **Federal Emergency Management Agency**) to extend EAS into new technologies, including online social media, so that alerts will reach all people, even those assessing Facebook or Twitter during an emergency, so that everyone gets alerts, whether or not they are tuning into traditional media outlets. Mobile operators are already supposed to be brought into the EAS network, but Collins' bill seems to be looking for an even wider distribution of messages to online services.

No doubt, the results of the test will be assessed in coming months, and given the breakdowns in the system, further tests are sure to be conducted. Whether these tests will occur before or after the introduction of the **IP-based CAP (Common Alert Protocol)** system to provide more robust alerts to the traditional media (now [scheduled for June 30, 2012](#)) remains to be seen. As we have [written before](#), CAP will augment, not replace, the current daisy-chain system. So the problems discovered by this test will still need to be resolved. With the issues that were discovered, there can be no doubt that broadcasters and other media outlets - quite possibly including on-line media outlets - will hear more about EAS obligations in the near future.

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