



FEMA

Fact Sheet

Emergency Broadcast System (EAS)

The EAS started as the Emergency Broadcast System in 1944 to provide the public accurate and timely information during emergencies. Through the major television networks and radio stations, the government could send an electronic warning to their audiences. The Emergency Broadcast System was updated in 1994, to expand the transmission means from tone-alert to any means of transmission, and became known as the Emergency Alert System. The EAS is still designed to act as a national warning system in case of major public emergencies. The EAS is jointly administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the National Weather Service (NWS). While a presidential EAS has never been activated, this system provides the President with the means to address the American people within 10 minutes of a national emergency. Authorized state and local emergency management personnel can also use the EAS to alert residents in affected areas.

The EAS has the ability to monitor the National Weather Service and rebroadcast emergency weather alerts. Emergency event alerts have been expanded from being mostly weather-related to include such things as:

AMBER Alerts for missing and endangered children in most states. To raise public awareness and to ensure the system works effectively, tests are regularly conducted via broadcast stations, radio, cable, and wireless cable systems.

The Future of EAS

Today as media consumption patterns change and the use of mobile devices such as cell phones and personal digital assistants increases, EAS is being redefined. On June 26, 2006, President Bush signed Executive Order 13407 directing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create a comprehensive Public Alert and Warning System for the United States. FEMA was directed to lead the effort and is now creating a set of technologies, called the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), which will render an alert message to enhanced and additional forms of media.

Digital Emergency Alert System (DEAS)

The Digital Emergency Alert System (DEAS) is an IPAWS pilot program that uses the digital capabilities of public television stations to provide alerts. This system would allow the transmission of emergency alerts directly to citizens and responders without the need for a special receiver, providing quicker and more seamless transmission. These alerts would be sent to users of computers, mobile phones, pagers, and other devices. Upgrades associated with the DEAS program include providing equipment to all public television stations across the United States to enable them to disseminate DEAS messages through their digital television broadcasts. In addition, there are ongoing DEAS pilot programs that can originate alerts and warnings using the Common Alerting Protocol and then disseminate them using the public television station digital broadcasts.

FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation, to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

