

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Modernization of the Nation's Alerting Systems	)	PS Docket No. 25-224
	)	

**REPLY COMMENTS OF
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS**

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)¹ hereby submits reply comments on the above-captioned Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, in which the FCC begins a “ground up” review of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and considers whether certain changes could make the system more effective.² The voluminous record of comments underscores the value of EAS; the unmatched resiliency of EAS’s strongest link: local broadcast stations; and the strong public interest in improving the system.

I. THE COMMISSION SHOULD PRESERVE THE EXISTING SYSTEM WHILE EXPLORING POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO EAS

The record highlights the importance of broadcasters to EAS and public safety. For example, North Carolina Emergency Management et al. state that radio stations “play a vital role in public safety and EAS alert,” and focus much of their comments on the future capabilities of “television broadcast and how it can be used in new and exciting ways to

¹ The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) is a nonprofit trade association that advocates on behalf of free local radio and television stations and broadcast networks before Congress, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) and other federal agencies, and the courts.

² *Modernization of the National Alerting Systems*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, PS Docket No. 25-224 (rel. Aug. 8, 2025) (Notice), at ¶ 1.

enhance emergency messaging.”³ Federal authorities agree. As iHeartMedia notes, the Director of FEMA’s IPAWS office has highlighted the importance of radio “to our nation’s emergency communications infrastructure,” and has emphasized that radio “serves as the backbone of the Emergency Alert System.”⁴ The record also includes comments by leading Senators and U.S. Representatives from across the aisle praising the life-saving public warning service provided by radio stations.⁵

The architecture of broadcasting makes radio and TV stations uniquely reliable during an emergency, and has shown time and again that broadcast-based alerting is the “gold standard for resiliency and reliability.”⁶ Individual stations ensure continuous operations through alternative transmission pathways and backup power, and broadcasting as a whole ensures redundant emergency service by virtue of the sheer number and geographic diversity of local television and radio stations in an area.⁷ If a few stations are downed by a disaster, there are almost always numerous other stations still on the air, providing timely warnings and detailed emergency information. Radio and television stations also have unparalleled reach and familiarity with their audiences,⁸ which allows them to

³ Comments of North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) et al., PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 8.

⁴ Comments of iHeartMedia, Inc., PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 3-4, 7 citing Randy J. Stine, RadioWorld, *Centeno’s Passion for Public Warning Comes Full Circle* (Sep. 30, 2024), <https://www.radioworld.com/newsand-business/news-makers/centenos-passion-for-public-warning-comes-full-circle>.

⁵ *Id.* at 5 and 8.

⁶ *Id.* at 13.

⁷ Comments of NAB, PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 10-11.

⁸ Comments of Sinclair Inc., PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1. See also Comments of America’s Public Television Stations and the Public Broadcasting Service (collectively, PTV), PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 5; Comments of National Public Radio, Inc. (NPR), PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 4.

distribute EAS messages broadly while also tailoring such warnings and ongoing emergency information to their local community.

On the other hand, the record is replete with instances where cell networks failed at the most inopportune times, such as during Hurricane Helene, when 90 percent or more of the cell sites in North Carolina were out of service,⁹ and Hurricane Ida, when more than 90 percent of cell sites in several counties in Louisiana were out of service.¹⁰ And unlike broadcast viewers and listeners, mobile phone users usually have nowhere to turn when their cell service goes down. Thus, we strongly disagree with CTA's and NCTA's uninformed or disingenuous view that broadcast-based EAS is not a critical part of the emergency alerting ecosystem.¹¹ As Sage explains, legacy "EAS is only part of a total national public alert system. EAS itself will never meet all of the desires of a total modern system – but it adds a resilience component to an overall system."¹² NPR reenforces the point: "[T]he Commission should not overlook the value and strength of the existing system. While new broadband technologies may eventually offer . . . enhanced features, the Commission must be mindful of broadband's limited usefulness during and after significant emergencies . . . when power often is lost or broadband and wireless network outages are extensive."¹³

⁹ Sinclair Comments at 2.

¹⁰ *Communications Status Report for Areas Impacted by Hurricane Ida* (Aug. 31, 2021), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-375367A1.pdf>.

¹¹ Comments of Consumer Technology Association (CTA), PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 2-3; Comments of NCTA – The Internet & Television Association, PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 3.

¹² Comments of Sage Alerting Systems, Inc., PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 2.

¹³ NPR Comments at 1. See *also* Comments of Michael Ravnitzky, PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1 ("Modern IP-based delivery paths can augment redundancy, but they must be overlaid on – rather than replace – the existing broadcast backbone.").

NAB submits that the proven success of broadcast-based EAS over many decades supports an approach in this proceeding that preserves the existing system while exploring the potential EAS changes in the Notice. The concepts in the Notice certainly deserve further consideration, but in NAB's view, should be treated as optional and should not impose more mandates or costs on EAS Participants. This approach will allow implementation of any EAS changes to be tailored to a specific communications sector, whether broadcast, cable, or perhaps new platforms, as well as to the circumstances and resources of individual EAS Participants.¹⁴ Such an approach is also consistent with NAB's support for technical innovations that will enhance the effectiveness of the existing system, such as our proposal to allow EAS participants to use a software-based encoder/decoder,¹⁵ which is explicitly intended as a voluntary option for EAS Participants.

II. THE COMMISSION SHOULD ENGAGE AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF EAS EXPERTS TO CONSIDER CERTAIN CONCEPTS RAISED IN THE NOTICE

The Commission offers a range of ideas regarding EAS, some of which most commenters embrace, some of which are widely doubted, and some of which raise complex concerns that require further consideration by an expert advisory committee. For example, many commenters praise the potential alerting capabilities of ATSC 3.0,¹⁶ such as the ability to transmit EAS messages, WEA alerts, and other emergency information to mobile devices

¹⁴ PTV Comments at 20 (“While PTV encourages innovation and flexibility in the alerting systems of the future, we also urge the Commission to make the implementation of new technologies voluntary for EAS participants so that they may be implemented based on the needs of the local communities that each EAS participant serves.”).

¹⁵ Petition for Rulemaking of the National Association of Broadcasters, PS Docket Nos. 15-94 and 22-329 (filed Mar. 31, 2025).

¹⁶ NAB Comments at 11.

equipped with ATSC 3.0 receivers.¹⁷ ATSC 3.0 may also allow broadcasters to provide helpful information beyond text and audio, including graphics, video, and images such as maps and evacuation routes. ATSC 3.0 may also have more geotargeting capabilities,¹⁸ and the ability to “wake up” properly enabled devices that are in sleep or standby mode.¹⁹ Finally, ATSC 3.0 is compatible with emerging platforms, such as home gateways, smart TVs, and connected vehicles.²⁰ Commenters agree that the potential public safety benefits of ATSC 3.0 are clear, and should be part of the FCC’s consideration of optional enhancements within a modernized national approach to alerting.

On the other hand, most commenters agree with the National Weather Service that allowing non-government entities to trigger alerts is a non-starter. Stakeholders are rightly concerned about over-alerting,²¹ and that extending this authority as proposed could undermine coordination with agencies that should be involved in the decision to issue an EAS alert.²² VDOT also notes that keeping the status quo ensures that alerts are not being triggered based on factors like business liability.²³

¹⁷ Sinclair Comments at 3-4. See *also* Comments of AWARN Alliance, PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1-2.

¹⁸ NCEM et al. Comments at 10.

¹⁹ Sinclair Comments at 4.

²⁰ Comments of ATSC, the Broadcast Standards Association, PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 3.

²¹ Comments of NOAA/National Weather Service (NWS), PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1; NAB Comments at 7-8.

²² Comments of King County Emergency Management, PS Docket No. 25-24 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 2.

²³ Comments of Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 2; NAB Comments at 7. Commenters also agree that allowing government entities at all levels to issue alerts effectively ensures that agencies with the appropriate authority can rapidly provide the right information to the public, and helps to ensure that alerts come from a trusted, fully informed source. Comments of New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25,

Most of the other ideas in the Notice raise technical or policy questions that should be further considered in an expert advisory committee. For instance, some commenters agree that video-rich EAS alerts would provide more user-friendly, accessible information,²⁴ but NOAA/NWS and several others caution that dissemination of larger video files could be impeded or delayed due to bandwidth capacities.²⁵ DAS raises additional concerns, such as who would bear the costs of implementing video EAS, and how would FEMA develop the needed infrastructure and maintain secure, redundant distribution.²⁶ Introducing video EAS could require a multi-year, expensive redesign of EAS that should be thoroughly vetted in a public-private forum.²⁷

Similarly, many commenters support improving the geo-targeting²⁸ and cybersecurity²⁹ of EAS but note various challenges. Regarding the former, NOAA/NWS explains that developing partial county alerting by dividing counties into subsections is very labor intensive, making it difficult for broadcast EAS to improve its current geo-targeting of alerts, while other platforms like satellite radio and cable boxes could possibly be programmed to use polygons instead of relying on county-based alerting.³⁰ NAB agrees with

2025), at 1; Notice at ¶ 8. See also NAB Comments at 4; King County Comments at 2; Comments of REC Networks, PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at ¶ 13.

²⁴ NYCEM Comments at 3.

²⁵ PTV Comments at 19; NOAA/NWS Comments at 2; NAB Comments at 8-9.

²⁶ Comments of Digital Alert Systems, Inc. (DAS), PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 16-17.

²⁷ If a mechanism is ultimately developed, NAB agrees with NOAA/NWS that video EAS alerting should be supported, but not mandatory for EAS Participants. NOAA/NWS Comments at 2.

²⁸ Comments of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 2; NYCEM Comments at 5.

²⁹ NAB Comments at 16; Cal OES Comments at 2; NCTA Comments at 6-7; DHSES Comments at 3; NYCEM Comments at 5.

³⁰ NOAA/NWS Comments at 2.

DAS that stakeholders should work with EAS manufacturers to consider ways to integrate polygon-based geotargeting into EAS.³¹ Regarding the latter, parties explain that adding encryption, authentication, validation, or other security measures to EAS could raise issues related to message delivery latency,³² the vetting and certification of alert originators,³³ equipment supply chain integrity,³⁴ and EAS Participants' cyber hygiene practices,³⁵ among other things.

Finally, the FCC raises the prospect of extending emergency alerting to additional platforms, such as streaming services, social media, and personal computers.³⁶ The record reflects disagreement regarding the need for such an approach. Several emergency management authorities support this idea so that emergency alerting can reach Americans where they consume content and information today.³⁷ WA EMD provides some interesting suggestions for how this could possibly be achieved through the development of standardized APIs within IPAWS that can be securely accessed and consumed by such new platforms.³⁸ Some parties state that expanding EAS to end-user smart devices that are connected to the Internet could promote EAS access for persons with disabilities, and the personalization of alerts, such as the size, contrast, and language of alerts.³⁹

³¹ DAS Comments at 23.

³² NAB Comments at 15-16.

³³ Sage Comments at 3-5,

³⁴ DAS Comments at 48-55

³⁵ *Id.* at 57-58.

³⁶ Notice at ¶ 18.

³⁷ NYCEM Comments at 6-7; King County Comments at 3; Comments of Washington Emergency Management Division (WA EMD), PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 11-14.

³⁸ WA EMD Comments at 14.

³⁹ NFB Comments at 1-2; NYCEM Comments at 6.

On the other hand, CTA claims that expanding alerting to end user devices is unnecessary because wireless emergency alerts already reach the public sufficiently.⁴⁰ CTA also raises technical barriers that would need to be overcome, such as the inability of many over-the-top devices to broadcast real-time content and the inability of streaming services to geo-target content.⁴¹

Given the complexity of this and other ideas in the Notice, NAB joins with commenters urging the FCC to establish a public-private advisory committee of experts to study some of the thorny questions posed in the Notice.⁴² DAS recommends relying on the FEMA IPAWS Subcommittee and the FCC Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC), and reinstating the FCC's National Advisory Committee (NAC).⁴³ Such a committee should examine not only the technical feasibility of the ideas in the Notice, but also the attached costs and benefits. NAB respectfully reminds the FCC that EAS is an unfunded mandate on broadcasters and other EAS Participants, so the financial

⁴⁰ CTA Comments at 2-4.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 5-7.

⁴² No less important are the calls by certain commenters for increasing access to EAS messages, such as through American Sign Language, personalized alerts, audio description, Braille, and improved message content. Comments of American Council of the Blind (ACB), PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1-2; Comments of TDI for Access, Inc., et al., PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 2-6; Comments of National Federation Council of the Blind, PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1-3; Comments of Disability Belongs, PS Docket No. 25-244 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 1-2. These matters deserve further discussion, but may be technically challenging and the record contains few details on how they could actually be implemented in EAS. Thus, NAB agrees with those urging the FCC to consider convening a time-limited task force or advisory committee focused on the accessibility-related issues in the Notice. TDI et al. Comments at 1; ACB Comments at 1; Disability Belongs Comments at 2.

⁴³ DAS Comments at 13; see also Comments America's Communications Association, PS Docket No. 25-224 (Sep. 25, 2025), at 7.

demands of the concepts in the Notice, and who should bear those costs, must be an integral part of the further consideration of the issues in the Notice.

III. CONCLUSION

NAB supports exploration of ways to enhance EAS, while preserving the existing EAS system as a critically important redundant failsafe backup. Broadcasters take pride in their unique role in EAS, and look forward to working with the FCC and other stakeholders to further consider the concepts discussed in the Notice.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Kaplan, Larry Walke, Kelly Williams".

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