

Radio TechCheck

The Weekly NAB Newsletter for Radio Broadcast Engineers

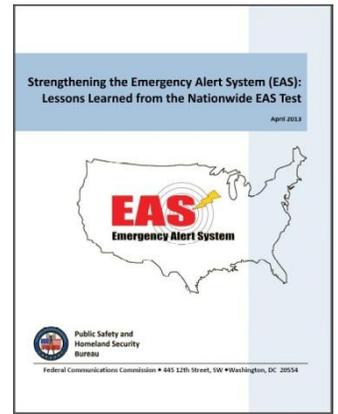


FCC Releases Nationwide EAS Test Report

On April 15, 2013 the FCC released a [report](#) discussing the results of the first-ever nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), conducted jointly in 2011 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). One and a half years after this test was conducted, the Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau has, in this report, released its observations of the test and recommendations for improving the system. Deemed in large part a success by the Bureau, with EAS generally performing as designed were it to be activated for an actual emergency, the test nonetheless highlighted several areas of concern and ways to strengthen the system.

For this test, at 2PM EST on November 9, 2011, FEMA successfully transmitted an Emergency Action Notification (EAN), a live EAS code, to 63 Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations. The results of the nationwide test were largely positive, with only 5% of National Primary Stations failing to receive the alert (see table below). However, the test was not without issues and the Bureau, in its report, points to seven main problems:

- Widespread poor audio quality nationwide;
- Lack of PEP station (particularly in the Portland, Oregon area);
- Problems with the use of alternatives to PEP-based EAN distribution;
- Inability to receive the EAN;
- Inability to retransmit the EAN and/or deliver the alert to the public;
- Short test length (changed just prior to the test, from 2 minutes and 30 seconds to only 30 seconds);
- Anomalies in EAS equipment programming and operation;



EAS Designation	Stations		Receipt of EAN			
	Total Stations	%	Success	%	Failure	%
Broadcasters						
National Primary (PEP)	62	0.43%	59	95%	3	5%
State Primary	94	1%	79	84%	15	16%
State Relay	724	5%	606	84%	118	16%
Local Primary 1 (LP1)	916	7%	756	83%	160	17%
Local Primary 2 (LP2)	720	5%	580	81%	140	19%
Participating National	10,753	78%	9,026	84%	1,727	16%
Non-Participating National	301	2%	219	73%	82	27%
Unidentified	217	2%	176	81%	41	19%
Total Broadcasters	13,787		11,501	83%	2,286	17%
Cable Operators	Headends					
Participating National	2,944		2,160	73%	784	27%
All Total	16,731		13,661	82%	3,070	18%

While poor audio quality at the PEP level negatively affected delivery to larger areas of the country, the large majority of problems encountered were the results of equipment and individual EAS participant failures.

In the report, the Bureau recommends another nationwide test after the Commission takes the necessary steps to improve EAS functioning. The Bureau makes a number of recommendations in the report for improvement of EAS and identifies some steps to take for the next nationwide EAS test, including:

- Examine equipment performance and seek comment on proposed changes to EAS equipment rules to ensure consistency;
- Update State EAS plans and re-examine FCC State EAS plan rules;
- Develop and publicize EAS participant best practices for EAS operation;
- Additional FCC rulemaking to address issues left open in previous EAS orders;
- Develop a new EAS test database for participants to report to;
- Reconvene the Federal EAS test working group.

Lessons for Broadcasters from South Korean Malware Attack

Recent malware attacks on South Korean targets have included financial institutions and broadcasters. A report prepared by the DHS National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center (NCCIC) answers questions that U.S. broadcasters may have about the attacks and what can be done to prevent them in the U.S. The Report characterizes the design of the attack as “low sophistication – high damage” and recommends that the best defensive measures that can be taken to prevent damage from similar attacks in the U.S. is to follow the best practices listed in pages 6 and 7 of the [Report](#).

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