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Radio TechCheck



The Weekly NAB Newsletter for Radio Broadcast Engineers

FCC RELEASES EAS-CAP RULEMAKING

On May 27, 2011 the FCC released a *Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)* in EB Docket 04-296, seeking comment on a number of proposed changes to Part 11 of its rules governing the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The FCC states that the purpose of the NPRM is to codify into the Rules the obligation to process EAS messages formatted in the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) and to streamline and clarify these rules generally to enhance their effectiveness.

In 2007, the FCC in its *Second Report and Order* in this docket, required broadcasters and other EAS Participants to purchase and install equipment capable of receiving and decoding a CAP formatted EAS message. However there was nothing in the Rules at that time that gave EAS participants guidance on operational issues such as what source to monitor for federal EAN's. The Commission stated that their proposed revisions to Part 11 seek to integrate CAP-based alert messaging into the existing EAS while laying the foundation for transitioning to next generation alert mechanisms. The NPRM also seeks comment on several proposed rule revisions unrelated to CAP that are designed to modernize and streamline the Part 11 rules by eliminating outdated technical and procedural requirements, and more generally, improve the overall effectiveness of the EAS.

Among other things, the NPRM seeks comment on:

- A tentative conclusion that the FCC's focus should be on ensuring that CAP-formatted alert messages entered into the EAS are converted into and processed in the same way as messages formatted in the EAS Protocol.
- A tentative conclusion that the Commission should revise the Part 11 rules to make clear that EAS Participants must be able to convert CAP-formatted EAS messages into EAS Protocol-compliant EAS messages in accordance with the ECIG Recommendations for a CAP EAS Implementation Guide, Version 1.0 (May 17, 2010).
- A tentative conclusion that the Commission should amend the Part 11 rules to require that EAS Participants monitor the RSS 2.0 feed(s) utilized by: (i) FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System for federal CAP-formatted messages; and (ii) state alert systems as the source of governor-originated CAP messages (provided these are described in the State Area EAS Plan submitted to and approved by the Commission).
- Whether the FCC should permit EAS Participants to meet their CAP-related obligations by deploying intermediary devices that convert CAP-formatted messages into EAS Protocol-formatted messages for transmission over the EAS Participants' transmission platforms.
- Whether and how the Commission should incorporate compliance with CAP functionality into its existing certification scheme, including how the Commission should implement conformance testing related to the proper translation of CAP-formatted messages into EAS Protocol-compliant messages and what requirements the Commission should adopt for modified EAS equipment.
- Whether the Commission should classify intermediary devices as stand-alone devices subject to the same certification requirements as stand-alone decoders and encoders.
- Whether the current September 30, 2011, deadline for CAP-compliance is sufficient or whether the FCC should extend or modify it.

- A tentative conclusion that the obligation of EAS Participants to receive and transmit CAP-formatted messages initiated by state governors only applies to the extent that state governors have formatted such CAP messages using FEMA's standards for federal CAP messages.
- Any rule revisions needed to fully implement the obligation to process CAP-formatted messages initiated by state governors, including whether the FCC must adopt a new origination and/or event code and whether the obligation should extend to governors of any adjacent states in which the EAS Participant provides service.
- A tentative conclusion that the FCC should define the geo-targeting element of mandated gubernatorial alerts in Part 11 in the same way as they define the location provisions in the current EAS Protocol.
- Whether the Commission should substantially simplify procedures for processing EANs set forth in section 11.54 and related Part 11 rule sections so that EAS Participants process EANs like any other EAS message, only on a mandatory and priority basis.
- Eliminate the Emergency Action Termination event code and replace it where necessary with the End Of Message code in the Part 11 rules;
- Eliminate the EAS Operating Handbook and instead require EAS Participants to maintain within their facilities a copy of the current FCC-filed and approved versions of the State and Local Area EAS Plans.
- Whether the FCC can delete some or all of the current provisions relating to the Attention Signal in sections 11.32(9) and 11.33(b) of the rules and instead apply the minimal standard currently set forth in section 11.31(a)(2) or whether they should delete the Attention Signal from the Part 11 rules altogether.
- Whether the introduction of CAP to the existing technical framework of the EAS can improve access to emergency information to persons with disabilities

A copy of the NPRM can be found [here](#). The NPRM has not yet been published in the Federal Register but comments will be due to the FCC 30 days after publication and reply comments will be due 15 days after that.

EAS-CAP On-line Town Hall

WHAT: Analyzing the EAS NPRM: A Town Hall Discussion

WHEN: Thursday, June 16, 2011 – 4 - 5 p.m. EST

WHERE: www.EASalert.org

The National Alliance of State Broadcasters Associations (NASBA)-National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) Emergency Alert System (EAS) Committee is pleased to announce the third in a series of webinars on the implementation of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP).

“Analyzing the EAS NPRM: A Town Hall Discussion” will be presented on Thursday, June 16 at 4 p.m. EST. The one-hour session will feature a summary of the major components of the FCC’s EAS Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), as well as provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions. Information about the upcoming Town Hall will be available soon [here](#). *The NASBA-NAB EAS Committee is coordinating webinars and the [Web site](#) to provide resources for broadcasters and our EAS partners in implementing CAP by the September 30, 2011 deadline.*

To participate in this webinar, go to www.EASalert.org a few minutes before the presentation is scheduled to air. Once on the [Web site](#), click “Go To the Town Hall,” where you will be prompted for your name, affiliation and email address. This information will be collected to keep you informed about future events in this series and will not be sold or shared with outside parties.

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If you are unable to participate in the live town hall on June 16, it will be archived at www.EASalert.org within 72 hours of the presentation.

FCC to Conduct Training for Consultants on Communications Towers and Environmental/Historic Preservation Compliance

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is conducting a [session](#) for consultants on Tuesday, June 21, 2011 at their headquarters in Washington, DC on Communications Towers and Environmental/Historic Preservation Compliance. Training will be provided by staff from the FCC, USDA Rural Utilities Service, NTIA, FEMA and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

For additional information contact [Steve DelSordo](#) and to register contact [James Swartz](#) who are both at the FCC. To attend the session you must preregister.



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