

# TV TechCheck

The Weekly NAB Newsletter for TV Broadcast Engineers



## Broadcasters Must Make Their Emergency Crawls Accessible in Two Years

On April 9, 2013, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Report and Order (R&O) and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (*Further Notice*) adopting new rules regarding the accessibility of televised emergency information and video description functionality requirements for apparatus. The R&O implements provisions of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (“CVAA”). The CVAA required the FCC to make emergency information (as it is defined in section 79.2 of the Rules) accessible to individuals that are blind or visually impaired. In addition it required that the FCC complete a rulemaking and issue rules on access to emergency information by April 9, 2013. (See *TV TechCheck* from 12/03/2012)

The new rules require broadcasters (and other entities covered under the existing emergency information requirements in Section 79.2 of the rules) to use a secondary audio stream to convey televised emergency information aurally, when that information is conveyed visually (*i.e.*, in an on-screen crawl) during video programming other than newscasts. Television stations have two years from the date of Federal Register publication of the R&O to comply with the new rules. Among other things, the R&O:

- Clarifies that the new emergency information requirements apply to entities that are already covered by Section 79.2 of the Commission’s rules – *i.e.*, broadcasters, MVPDs, etc. and any other distributors of video programming for residential reception that delivers such programming directly to the home and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission;
- Requires that covered entities make an aural presentation of emergency information that is provided visually in non-news-cast programming available on a secondary audio stream;
- Continues to require the use of an aural tone to precede emergency information on the main program audio, and now also requires use of the aural tones to precede emergency information on the secondary audio stream;
- Permits, but do not require, the use of text-to-speech (TTS) technologies as a method for providing an aural rendition of emergency information;
- Requires that if TTS is used, it must be intelligible and must use the correct pronunciation of relevant information to allow consumers to learn about and respond to the emergency, including, but not limited to, the names of shelters, school districts, streets, districts, and proper names noted in the visual information;
- Requires that emergency information provided aurally on the secondary audio stream be conveyed at least twice in full;
- Requires that emergency information supersede all other programming on the secondary audio stream;
- Did not adopt a technical capability exception where by stations could apply for exemptions such as with video description;

- Video programming distributors (e.g., cable systems) are responsible for ensuring that the aural representation of the emergency information (including the accompanying aural tone) gets passed through to consumers;
- Required mobile DTV to make secondary audio streams available to consumers, because such streams are the existing mechanism for providing video description and the new mechanism for making emergency information accessible. Devices have two years to comply with this requirement.

The Further Notice portion of the item seeks comment on three unresolved issues from the proceeding that reinstated the Video Description rules. Of particular note is a request for comment on how broadcasters should “tag” or “announce” the video description audio (and emergency information audio) in the AC-3 descriptor contained in the station’s transport streams. Specifically, the FCC wants to know whether the “visually impaired” (“VI”) tag should be mandated for video description streams and whether covered apparatus should be required to detect and decode audio streams that include the “VI”.

The Report and Order is available on the FCC’s Web page here.  
[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/FCC-13-45A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-13-45A1.pdf)



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