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# TV TechCheck



The Weekly NAB Newsletter for Television Broadcast Engineers

## FCC Seeks Input on Accessibility of Emergency Information

On November 19, the FCC released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) seeking comment on a proposal to make emergency information broadcast on television accessible to persons that are blind or visually impaired. The rules would specifically apply to emergency information that typically crawls across the bottom of the TV screen. The FCC initiated this proceeding to implement the provisions of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA). The CVAA requires 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 requires that the FCC complete a rulemaking and issue rules on access to emergency information by April 9, 2013.

Specifically the NPRM proposes to require covered entities (e.g. TV broadcasters) to make emergency information that is provided visually during programming that is not a newscast (such as that provided via crawls) accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired by using a secondary audio stream to provide that emergency information aurally and concurrently with the emergency information being conveyed visually.

The NPRM notes that accessibility of this emergency information is a separate matter from accessibility of an activation of the Emergency Alert System (“EAS”) which is covered in Section 11.1 of the Rules. This proceeding considers revisions to Section 79.2 of the Commission’s Rules which applies more broadly to televised emergency information.

The NPRM seeks comment on a number of issues including:

- The benefits of providing accessible emergency information on a secondary audio stream and the incremental costs of providing a secondary audio stream for this purpose.
- Are there any broadcasters or MVPDs that do not currently provide a secondary audio stream, and if so, should the new rules apply any differently to them?
- Are there technical capability issues that should be taken into account in the context of requiring emergency information to be provided on a secondary audio stream?
- If lack of technical capability is an issue, how should the Commission consider it in revising its emergency information rules as proposed?
- If a video programming distributor does not currently make available a secondary audio stream, but it has the technical capability to do so, should the Commission require it to make available a secondary audio stream that could be used to provide emergency information?
- Or are there alternative ways for video programming distributors that do not have a secondary audio stream to provide such information?
- What impact, if any, would the proposals contained in this NPRM have on broadcasters’ ability to channel share?
- What additional bandwidth, if any, would MVPDs need to transmit multiple audio streams, and how would this affect their networks if they carry multiple audio streams for all channels?
- Are any broadcasters or MVPDs providing more than two audio streams? If there are more than two audio streams available, what is provided or should be provided on those audio streams and how will consumers know which one to tune to for emergency information?
- Should aurally accessible emergency information always be provided on the audio stream containing video description, rather than on a stream dedicated to aurally accessible emergency information or containing other program-related material, such as a Spanish or other language audio stream?
- Whether and how the proposals contained in the NPRM should apply to EAS alerts. For example, to what extent is emergency information provided as visual-only EAS alerts?

In addition the FCC would like to know what time frame is appropriate for requiring covered entities to convey emergency information in a secondary audio stream and seeks comment on whether the Commission should update its definition of "emergency information" in Section 79.2 of the Rules. Finally, the FCC would like commenters to identify any other alternative methods by which emergency information could be made accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The docket number for this proceeding is MB 12-107. Comments are due on December 18, 2012, reply comments are due December 28. Text of the NPRM is available at [http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DA-12-1908A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-12-1908A1.pdf).

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