

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2023

Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Criswell,

It has come to our attention that numerous domestic and foreign automakers are no longer offering AM radio in their new electric vehicle (EV) models, and some are even considering discontinuing AM radio in all new car models. This greatly concerns us not only because nearly 50 million Americans¹ rely on AM radio for their news, traffic, sports, weather, and music, but because AM radio is the backbone of the nation's Emergency Alert System (EAS).

As you know well, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) uses the EAS to provide authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public. The EAS relies on multiple overlapping modes of communication, and AM radio is a backbone of this system. Certain AM radio stations are designated as National Public Warning System stations and are equipped with backup power and communications to remain operational in the event of an emergency. Unlike some other communication methods, including FM and HD radio, AM radio has extensive geographic reach, including into areas where there is little cellular service or access to broadband internet. There is considerable evidence of Americans relying on radio for vital emergency information during severe weather events, such as Hurricane Sandy.²

Seven of your predecessors recently wrote to the Department of Transportation regarding the threat to the EAS system posed by not having reliable access to AM radio in EVs.³ While we are grateful that the Director of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, has expressed how the lack of AM radio in EVs poses a "grave threat to future local, state, and federal disaster response and relief efforts,"⁴ we seek more clarity on the specific threats this poses to the EAS and what FEMA is doing to ensure the EAS can continue to carry out its vital role so that our constituents can remain confident in their ability to receive emergency alerts. Especially given the growth in sales of EVs, it is vital for FEMA to make clear the negative impacts that lacking access to AM radio will have on public safety infrastructure.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/10/business/media/am-radio-cars.html>

² <https://archive.nytimes.com/mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/18/after-hurricane-sandy-people-flock-to-radio-for-information/>

³ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/electric-vehicles-need-am-radio-former-emergency-officials-argue-9e69e297>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/faith-freedom-self-reliance/electric-vehicle-makers-are-threatening-public-safety>

To better understand the impact of this decision by automakers on the EAS, we request answers to the following questions:

1. To what degree does the decision by many automakers to no longer include AM radio in EVs threaten the effectiveness of the EAS?
2. How many of the National Public Warning System stations rely exclusively on broadcasting through AM radio?
3. Has FEMA taken any action to dissuade automakers from removing AM radio from their EV models or does it intend to do so in the future?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress