

The Need

The EAS system was established by the FCC in November of 1994 to replace the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) as a tool the President and others may use to warn the public about emergency situations. By design, it is intended to warn the general public as quickly as possible of emergencies of national importance.

The Organization

Regulated by the FCC, the EAS system includes radio stations, TV stations, and cable providers. It is to be activated for *life threatening situations*, and alerts may come from different sources (NWS, President, state, local, etc). Participation for tests and presidential alerts is mandatory for broadcasters, while participation for local alerts (i.e. weather) is *voluntary*. Each state has a broadcaster’s association or communications committee that develops a state EAS plan in conjunction with state officials and the NWS. This plan designates primary and secondary stations (i.e. who listens to whom), and how alerts will be handled within the state.

How It Works



- Each station is designated as LP1 (first local primary), LP2 (second local primary), or PN (Point).
- Each station is assigned an LP1 and LP2 to monitor. They may also monitor other sources such as NWR.
- Each station has an “EAS box” (decoder), which is programmed to monitor their LP1/LP2, the area of concern, and how to handle the various alerts.
- The EAS decoder monitors the selected stations, and when digital EAS Header (SAME) codes are heard, the box decodes the tones and extracts the information (FIPS code, type of alert, originator, and duration).
- For each type of message, an EAS decoder is programmed to one of 3 modes:
 - Manual – people must send the messages
 - Semi-Automatic (holds message for 15 minutes before auto transmitting)
 - Or Automatic – messages go directly on the air.
- Messages are limited to 2 minutes. (Decoders will cut message off at 2 minutes.)

Some stations may also have an EAS encoder. An encoder allows someone to originate an EAS message. Cable providers, for example, sometimes have an encoder which can be accessed via telephone. This allows local emergency managers to originate a cable-override EAS message remotely.



The Role of NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards

Through NOAA Weather Radio (NWR), the NWS is a key player in dissemination of local warnings via EAS. Many stations monitor weather radio stations as an input. When an EAS message is broadcast over NWR, it is picked up by those stations. They then retransmit it, and it is picked up by the stations that are monitoring them, and so on. Local officials may also tap into the power of the EAS system by relaying local emergency information via the NWS and NOAA Weather Radio.

On the web:

FCC EAS System.....www.fcc.gov/eb/eas
 National Weather Service www.weather.gov