



FEMA

Dear Partner,

As part of our nation's ongoing efforts to strengthen our resilience against all hazards, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), in close coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), will conduct the first ever nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System on Wednesday, November 9, at 2:00 p.m. EST. The test will occur simultaneously across the United States and the U.S. territories and will last approximately 30 seconds, after which regular programming will resume. The test will appear on all broadcast radio and television stations, cable television systems, satellite radio and television systems, and wireline video service systems. The test will not involve landline or mobile phones or other infrastructure such as power grids.

The various disasters our country has faced this year underscore the need for effective and well-tested emergency alert and warning systems that could be used in a time of real national emergency, at a moment's notice. Now, with the test less than a week away, we ask that you join us in efforts to educate your entire community about this important event.

Although the Emergency Alert System and its predecessors have been in existence for more than 50 years and are often tested at the local level, there has never been a nationwide test of these capabilities. The purpose of the test is to allow FEMA and the FCC to assess how well the Emergency Alert System would perform its primary function: alerting the public about a national emergency.

The first step toward building a modernized Emergency Alert System means testing the existing technology. Through preparations for the test, we have already identified areas that need improvement to ensure our entire population has full access to alerts and warnings. This nationwide test will help us identify any additional changes to the system that may be beneficial as we work to complete a modernized and fully accessible system.

A shortcoming of the system that we identified early in the process is that the fifty-year old system was not built to support open or closed captioning, translations, or other tools to supplement the audio portion of the test for broader accessibility. Consequently, many viewers, particularly cable television subscribers, will see the emergency alert on the screen that is accompanied by an audio explanation that "this is only a test," but may not see a corresponding visual message that "this is only a test." Knowing these limitations, FEMA and the FCC have targeted our outreach efforts to help ensure that the public knows what to expect when the test occurs. And, in these past weeks leading up to the test, the broadcast community, cable operators and programmers, and other communications service providers have conscientiously assisted in this effort by alerting their viewers and subscribers about the test—through visual and written communications.

Over the past year, our agencies have also been working extensively with our state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, and other critical stakeholders to help inform all members of the public regarding

the nationwide Emergency Alert System test. In particular, we have conducted extensive outreach to the deaf and hard of hearing community to alert them about the test, including the technical limitations with the visual message, particularly with respect to cable television. To ensure that everyone is aware that the nationwide test on November 9 is only a test, we are also requesting your assistance with outreach. We particularly request that you provide information to people who are deaf and hard of hearing, people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities or mental health concerns, senior citizens, and people with limited English proficiency to build awareness and understanding about the test.

Specifically, we ask that you help us educate your communities regarding some important facts about the test:

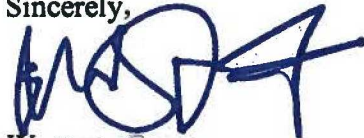
- The test will be approximately 30 seconds long and will look and sound very similar to the frequent local tests of the Emergency Alert System;
- It will be transmitted via television and radio stations within the U.S., including Alaska, Hawaii, the territories of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa;
- An audio message will interrupt television and radio programming indicating: "This is only a test," though text may not indicate this same message on the screen on every television channel;
- Organizations that serve people with disabilities or people with limited English proficiency should be aware that they may receive requests for information or assistance from broadcasters or other communications service providers and emergency managers in the days leading up to, during, and after the test; and
- When the test is over, regular programming will resume.

In the coming days, our agencies will be releasing additional information to help inform the public about this test. Resources, including videos in accessible formats, can be found at:


www.fema.gov/eastest.

As with all of our work, we know that the support of our state, local, tribal and territorial partners, along with the private sector, our faith-based and disability communities, and other key stakeholders, will be vital to effectively raising the public's awareness of the test and minimizing undue public concern. We greatly appreciate your continued partnership as we prepare for this unique event and important public service. Your efforts to help us get the message out will be invaluable.

Sincerely,



W. Craig Fugate
ADMINISTRATOR
Federal Emergency Management Agency



Julius Genachowski
CHAIRMAN
Federal Communications Commission