



FEMA

July 10, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matters of: PS Docket No. 15-91
Regarding Wireless Emergency Alerts

PS Docket No. 15-94
Regarding the Emergency Alert System

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) respectfully requests a limited waiver of the Commission's Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) rules allowing Participating Commercial Mobile Service Providers to participate in a nationwide WEA test to be conducted by FEMA.

The proposed live test on September 20, 2018, (primary date, with October 3, 2018 as a secondary date) will be originated at 14:18 hours ET and will involve sending a WEA message to the entire United States and U.S. territories. The 87-character test message to be displayed on cellular handsets will read:

THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed.

This will be the first nationwide test of WEA utilizing the Presidential level code. This test is necessary because it will determine if carrier WEA configuration, systems, and networks can and will process a Presidential WEA delivering the message via all WEA enabled cell sites with minimal latency. FEMA proposes to conduct this test in September in conjunction with National Preparedness Month. Public safety officials need to be sure that in times of an emergency or disaster, they have methods and systems that will deliver urgent alerts and warnings to the public when needed. Periodic testing of public alert and warning systems is a way to assess the operational readiness of the infrastructure for distribution of a national message and determine what technological improvements need to be made. As the proposed test will utilize the Presidential level code, the pending WEA test capability scheduled to become available in May 2019 would not directly apply as it will not exercise the same WEA functionality. The test will also help to assess the effectiveness of WEA message delivery overall.

In addition on September 20, 2018, (primary date, with October 3, 2018 as a secondary date) at 14:20 hours ET FEMA proposes to conduct the fourth in our continuing series of nationwide EAS tests. This year the EAS message will again be disseminated via Integrated Public Alert and Warning (IPAWS). The EAS test message will support the nationwide WEA test through direct reference with the following message:

THIS IS A TEST of the National Emergency Alert System. This system was developed by broadcast and cable operators in voluntary cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Communications Commission, and local authorities to keep you informed in the event of an emergency. If this had been an actual emergency an official message would have followed the tone alert you heard at the start of this message. A similar wireless emergency alert test message has been sent to all cell phones in the nation. Some cell phones will receive the message. Others will not. No action is required.

Should the FCC approve this request, FEMA will develop multi-media public announcements in advance of the upcoming WEA test. Stakeholders for the national level test will be assigned a role within their area of operation and expertise. FEMA's IPAWS Program Management Office (PMO) has categorized partners into five major functional groups: (1) the American people; (2) Federal governance; (3) Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local alerting authorities, or "alerting authorities" including 911 public safety answering positions; (4) private sector industry; and (5) non-profit and advocacy organizations. A timeline has been developed to reach out to these stakeholders with information on the test and its purpose.

FEMA and Department of Homeland Security employees throughout the country will be asked to respond to a short questionnaire to provide a snapshot of the WEA test message delivery. Additionally, FEMA will review any surveys of test observation which may be published by states or other organizations.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Antwane Johnson, Director, IPAWS PMO.

Respectfully Submitted,

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