Before the

Federal Communications Commission

Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matters of

Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission’s )

)

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

**Comments of Adrienne Abbott**

INTRODUCTION

My comments are being submitted as an experienced broadcaster and are mine alone. During my career I covered several events which could have met the criteria for a Blue Alert. These events were horrifying at the time and in one case, took place within blocks of the station where I worked. I would have had no qualms about issuing an EAS activation to warn the public about the threat so I would like to begin by saying that I support the idea of a Blue Alert program.

In response to the request for comment in Paragraph 7, law enforcement officials already have the ability to use the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to issue warnings about suspects who pose an imminent and credible threat to law enforcement officers and the public. These warnings can be issued through the use of the LEW or Law Enforcement Warning Event Code listed in Part 11 of the FCC’s rules on the Emergency Alert System. The FCC does not provide specific definitions for the non-Presidential Event Codes. Instead, individual states have the ability to define non-weather Event Codes in their EAS Plans. The Office of Community oriented Policing Service (COPS) of the US Department of Justice (DoJ) should encourage local law enforcement agencies to work with their State Emergency Communications Committees to produce Blue Alert Plans in each state, similar to what the DoJ did for AMBER Alerts. And remember that the CAE or Child Abduction Emergency, Event Code was in Part 11 before the various abducted child alert programs coalesced around the AMBER Alert. We had the "Krystal Alert" here in Nevada. Other states had similar child abduction programs such as the "Malcolm Alert" or "Rachel Alert". The CAE Event Code was designed to cover these programs before every state adopted the term “AMBER Alert” for their abducted, endangered children programs. It was the unifying efforts of the DoJ and NCMEC, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which resulted in the success of all states adopting the term "AMBER Alert" without the need for a new Event Code.

In response to Paragraph 14, I note that by using an existing Event Code, EAS participants, such as our small Mom-and-Pop radio stations, non-profit Low Power FM stations, public broadcasters, community cable providers and yes, those large corporate radio and TV stations, won’t have to purchase an upgrade for their EAS equipment just to meet a new FCC requirement to process a new EAS Event Code. EAS equipment providers have offered several recent upgrades for new EAS Event Codes at no cost to their customers but most have noted that they can’t afford to continue providing free upgrades.

Paragraph 17. In response to the request for comment on the time frame in which a dedicated Blue Alert Event Code could be implemented, I note that there will be a need for new EAS Plans to be written to accommodate the use of the Blue Alert, law enforcement agencies to purchase and train on new IPAWS CAP technology so that they can issue Blue Alerts, existing COG’s will need to be re-credentialed and updated to add the Blue Alert Event Code to their list of approved codes, and public awareness campaigns will have to be conducted to train broadcast audiences and cell phone users about the Blue Alert. These projects will take much longer than the six months proposed for EAS Participants to acquire and install updated EAS equipment. I estimate that it would take two years for this process, based on my experience with previous EAS expansions, including the AMBER Alert.

In response to Paragraph 21, it should be noted that the addition of a Blue Alert would require re-writing EAS Plans. Many states have recently rewritten their EAS Plans and there may not be funding or personnel available for writing an update. The Blue Alert Plans would require the combined effort of law enforcement and EAS Participants. Law enforcement agencies are already short of staff.

But there is a hidden cost to implementing a Blue Alert Event Code. In response to the question in Paragraph 28, “…are there costs or benefits that should be considered that are not captured in the above discussion?” the answer is “Yes”. The NPRM gives no consideration to the cost that state and local government agencies would have to pay to update their existing IPAWS CAP tools and add their law enforcement agencies to their Collabrative Operating Groups, COGs, if the state already has access to IPAWS CAP. Not all states have access to IPAWS CAP, so separate provisions would have to be made for how agencies in those states would issue Blue Alerts. Then the law enforcement agencies would have to develop their own policies for issuing the Blue Alert and the staff would have to be trained in the use of the CAP tools to issue a Blue Alert activation on both the EAS and Wireless Emergency Alert platforms. The state and local COGS would also have to be re-credentialed for the new Event Code. All of this would come at a cost to the state and local agencies. Even if federal grant money is made available for implementing the Blue Alert, it is still ultimately the taxpayer who bears this burden.

Adopting a Blue Alert program using the current LEW Event Code lessens the cost. State and local law enforcement agencies will still need to be added to existing COG’s and trained on the existing CAP tools. There would be a cost to the state and local agencies for new EAS Plans, the updates to existing CAP tools, new credentials and training programs. There is no indication in the NPRM for who would be responsible for overseeing these activities.