

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Review of the Emergency Alert System)	EB Docket No. 04-296
)	
Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association, The Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, Inc., and the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, Petition for Immediate Relief)	
)	
Randy Gehman Petition for Rulemaking)	
_____)	

COMMENTS OF AT&T INC.¹

AT&T has long supported the Commission’s efforts to upgrade the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to incorporate the latest technologies and capabilities and facilitate integration of public alerting at the national, state and local levels through implementation of the Common Alerting Protocol (“CAP”). We thus welcome this opportunity to comment on the revisions to the Commission’s Part 11 EAS rules to codify the CAP-related requirements (originally adopted in the Commission’s *Second Report and Order*)² proposed in the *Third Further Notice* in the above-referenced proceeding.³ As the Commission considers these revisions, it should avoid adopting revisions that might unduly burden EAS participants’ systems or create system security issues, or that would undermine the Commission’s goal of a uniform, integrated public alerting

¹ AT&T files these comments on behalf of itself and its operating company affiliates (hereinafter “AT&T”).

² *Review of the Emergency Alert System, et al.*, EB Docket No. 04-296, *Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, 22 FCC Rcd 13275 (2007) (“*Second Report and Order*”).

³ *Review of the Emergency Alert System, et al.*, EB Docket No. 04-296, *Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, FCC 11-82 (rel. May 26, 2011) (*Third Further Notice*).

system. For these reasons, the Commission should ensure that its CAP-related monitoring requirements are not unduly onerous, and it should retain the EAS Operating Handbook to ensure that EAS participants implement the next generation EAS in a uniform manner. We elaborate on each of these points below.

1. The Commission Should Limit CAP-Related Monitoring Requirements.

In the Notice the Commission proposes to amend section 11.52 of its rules (47 C.F.R. § 11.52) to require EAS participants to monitor the RSS feed(s), which are used to distribute CAP-formatted alerts, designated by a state in its State Area EAS Plan (which must be approved by the Commission) as the source of governor-originated CAP messages, and inquires whether it should limit the number of state RSS feeds a participant must monitor.⁴ It also asks whether it should establish specific timing intervals governing how often a participant must poll such feed(s).

The Commission should adopt a limit on the number of state RSS feeds an EAS Participant must monitor. As AT&T previously has explained, AT&T's U-verse service is provided over an IP-based switched data services network that utilizes a client-server architecture requiring constant interaction between the network and customer premises equipment (CPE) to exchange messages and services.⁵ This constant, two-way interaction requires communications between the client and server to be encrypted to protect customer information, video and other content, which is accomplished in AT&T's network through Microsoft IPTV software running on PC-based servers and client software on the set-top box at the customer's premises. This content encryption, in turn, precluded implementation of a

⁴ *Id.* at ¶¶ 41.

⁵ AT&T Comments in EB Docket No. 04-296 (filed Dec. 3, 2007).

traditional EAS solution (like that utilized on traditional cable systems), which is implemented by directly modifying the unencrypted video stream to add a text message that becomes just another part of the video signal. Because disabling the encryption on AT&T's system, even temporarily, created unacceptable security risks (to customer privacy, and proprietary video and other content, as well as to AT&T's network), AT&T was required to work with its vendor to develop an EAS solution compatible with its system.

The system developed by AT&T's vendor relies on software (EASyCAP software) embedded in Encoder/Decoders (ENDECs) to monitor RSS feeds to check for any new EAS alerts and to receive CAP messages. That software currently caps at eight the number of sources that can be polled to receive CAP messages from any source per ENDEC. Consequently, the maximum number of RSS sources AT&T could monitor is eight per ENDEC. But, because RSS content has not yet been specified, and our vendor needs clear RSS definitions and actual RSS feeds to add RSS support to the EASyCAP software, AT&T will require advance notice of the number of RSS feeds that it would be required to monitor to be able to monitor even that number of RSS feeds.

In addition to these technical limitations on the overall number of RSS feeds it can monitor, AT&T has concerns that permitting states to require EAS participants to monitor multiple RSS feeds poses significant and very real network security issues. That is because AT&T's network security team must create new firewall rules for each RSS feed to allow its system to access and retrieve any new CAP messages. As a consequence, each additional RSS feed that AT&T must monitor adds to the risk that network security could be compromised. For

these reasons, AT&T believes the Commission should adopt a limit on the total number of state RSS feeds an EAS participant is required to monitor.⁶

In addition, AT&T believes the Commission should not adopt a specific timing interval for polling state RSS feeds, nor should it leave it to the states to develop in their State EAS plans. Rather, it should leave the timing of polling intervals to EAS participants, or, at most, establish a reasonable range within which EAS participants must poll state RSS feeds (such as between every 5 and 30 seconds). Accordingly, the Commission should ensure that EAS participants have flexibility to poll RSS feeds within a reasonable timing interval that would not threaten to overload the network.

2. The Commission Should Retain the EAS Operating Handbook.

The Commission also asks whether it should eliminate the EAS Operating Handbook. It should not. One of the principal objectives of this proceeding is to facilitate integration of public alerting at the national, state, and local levels. The EAS Operating Handbook helps to achieve this goal by providing a common roadmap of the operational procedures EAS Participants must follow to retrieve, process, and disseminate EAS alerts. The EAS Operating Handbook thus provides much needed uniformity to the EAS system.

Uniform EAS operating procedures are particularly important for AT&T, which provides its U-verse video service over an advanced IP-based network that employs a regional video distribution model. Specifically, AT&T obtains and aggregates video content from national sources at a Super Hub Office, and then distributes that content to regional video hub offices (“VHOs”) located across the country. Each VHO typically serves a particular DMA, which may,

⁶ For these same reasons, AT&T believes that EAS participants should only be required to monitor state-level RSS feeds designated by a state as the source for governor-originated CAP messages, and not RSS feeds originated by local governmental bodies.

and in many cases does, encompass municipalities in more than one state. If AT&T were required to implement different EAS operating procedures in each state, it could be forced to fundamentally alter the structure of its U-verse distribution system, undermining the economics of providing its competitive U-verse service and potentially forcing AT&T to cease providing the service in some communities. As a consequence, it is critically important that operating procedures for handling EAS alerts do not vary from state-to-state. Accordingly, the Commission should retain its EAS Operating Handbook.

3. Conclusion.

For the foregoing reasons, the Commission should limit the number of state RSS feeds an EAS Participant must monitor; decline to adopt a specific timing interval for polling state RSS feeds or to leave such intervals to the states to develop in their State EAS plans within reasonable limits set by the Commission; and retain the EAS Operating Handbook.

Respectfully submitted,

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