



North
Dakota
Emergency
Alert
System
(EAS)
Plan

Prepared by:

North Dakota State Emergency Communications Committee
in Cooperation with
North Dakota Division of Emergency Management
and
National Weather Service

August 2002

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EAS EQUIPMENT Y2K COMPATIBILITY

Concerns have been raised regarding the Y2K compatibility of EAS equipment. Several manufactures have posted verifications of EAS equipment Y2K compatibility on the Internet at their respective home pages. The Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBE) have also compiled letters from most major manufacturers on their web site at:

<http://www.sbe.org>

I encourage all EAS users and providers to check the SBE and/or manufacturers sites to learn more about Y2K issues as they apply to your specific brand of equipment. Should you have further questions on the specifics of Y2K compatibility, please contact your manufacturer.

SIGNATURES OF APPROVAL AND CONCURRENCE:

Approved:

Governor, State of North Dakota:

Broadcast Co-Chair, SECC

Cable Co-Chair, SECC

Chief, Compliance & Information Bureau
Federal Communications Commission

Concur:

Director, N.D. Division of Emergency Management

Bismarck National Weather Service

Grand Forks National Weather
Service

N.D. Broadcasters Association

N. D. Cable Association

NORTH DAKOTA STATE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS) PLAN

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide procedures for statewide activation of the North Dakota State-level Emergency Alert System (EAS).

INTRODUCTION

These procedures were prepared by the North Dakota State Emergency Communications Committee; the North Dakota Division of Emergency Management, the Federal Communications Commission; the National Weather Service; State and local officials; and the broadcasters and cable media of North Dakota (see Annex G for listing of SECC Membership). It provides background data and prescribes specific procedures for the broadcast and cable media to issue emergency information and warning to the general public in North Dakota or any portion thereof within the broadcast coverage and cable system service area, at the request of designated state and federal officials.

Acceptance of, or participation in this plan shall not be deemed to prohibit a broadcast licensee or cable media from exercising his/her independent discretion and responsibility in any given situation. The concept of management of each broadcast station or cable system to exercise discretion regarding the transmission of emergency messages and instructions to the general public is provided by the FCC Rules and Regulations, Part II. Broadcast stations and cable systems originating emergency communications shall be deemed to have conferred rebroadcast authority as specified in Section 11.54.

Detailed procedures, agreed upon by the broadcast and cable industries and the local area governments, which will permit designated government officials to issue local emergency messages and instructions, via EAS in threatened or actual emergencies, will be published as operational area plans.

AUTHORITY

Title 47 U.S.C. 151, 154(1) and (o), 303®, 524(9) and 606; and 47 C.F.R. Part 11, FCC Rules and Regulations, Emergency Alert System (EAS) as pertains to day-to-day emergency operations

ASSUMPTIONS

The listening and viewing habits of the public are inherent factors of consideration and are conducive to the positive effectiveness of the North Dakota EAS. The instinctive reaction of the average person is to turn on his radio or television set in time of emergency. However, continuing public education is required to increase public awareness of the North Dakota EAS, as an established medium for the receipt and distribution of emergency information to the general public at the local, state, and national levels.

All participating broadcast stations and cable media will monitor NOAA Weather Radio, if possible, as one of the two mandatory audio inputs.

The National Weather Service offices at Bismarck and Grand Forks will have the capability to encode and broadcast a President Emergency Activation Notice prior to the finalization of the North Dakota Emergency Alert System Plan.

All LP-1 stations will have the capability of monitoring at least three audio inputs; the state relay network system, NOAA Weather Radio, and the local government activation source.

The number of Operational Areas in the State of North Dakota will remain at eight.

The basic monitoring assignments will be as stated in Annex I Tabs 1-8.

The North Dakota Division of Emergency Management will provide EAS information to the broadcast and cable associations for distribution to their membership.

All participants in this plan, both Industry and Government will be very sensitive to the requirements of the disabled population regarding the receipt of emergency messages. The new digital EAS equipment has the capability to distribute emergency messages via devices that are of special use to the disabled. The Federal Communications Commission, in the EAS rulemaking, assured that this State Plan would provide an intelligent alert signal that is of special use to the disabled for equipment that may be developed for sale on the commercial market. A limited selection of this type of equipment is available at the present.

DEFINITIONS

Emergency: A situation posing an extraordinary threat to the safety of life and property. Examples include, but are not limited to, natural situations, such as floods, heavy snow, high winds, and icing conditions, as well as technological and man-made incidents that include, widespread fires, discharge of toxic gas, tornadoes, widespread power failures, industrial explosions, and civil disorders.

Designated Government Officials: The person or persons designated by governments signatory to this procedure to request activation of the EAS and to make emergency announcements.

EAS Designations: These are the FCC's EAS Station Designations reflecting the EAS status of every broadcaster and cable operator. Consult the FCC Mapbook.

National Primary (NP) - Source of all National EAS Alerts. This station will be monitored by North Dakota SR and designated LP stations.

State Primary (SP) - A primary source of EAS state programming which can originate with a Governor or designated representative, such as a state's emergency operations officer.

State Relay (SR) - SR stations are primarily sources of State EAS Messages. They will also be relaying National, Local, and Weather Alerts.

Local Primary (LP-1) - The local broadcast station in your area that was previously the EBS CPCS-1 station. LP-1 stations are primarily sources of Local Area Emergency EAS Messages. They will also be relaying National, State, and Weather Alerts.

Participating National (PN) - Most normal broadcasters and cable operators are designated as "PN". These sources are for delivering all levels of EAS to the public.

Non-Participating National (NN) - Broadcasters who hold a NN Authorization from the FCC to sign off the air during a National Emergency.

Emergency Operation Center (EOC) - (State, County, City. etc.) A specifically designed and designated facility with in a jurisdiction used for Emergency Operations.

National Warning System (NAWAS) - A dedicated Civil Defense telephone circuit, accessible from specific public safety answering points (PSAPs) and Weather Service officials in the State of North Dakota.

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) - NOAA Weather Radio stations are encoding their alerts with the coding that is used for EAS. Broadcasters and cable operators can feed their EAS Decoders with the audio from any normal NOAA Weather Radio receiver, and their EAS Decoder will react just as it does with broadcaster EAS codes.

Primary Entry Point - A radio station designated by the Federal Communications Commission to be the primary point of entry from the National Communications System for a specific region. The FCC has appointed KFYZ-AM to this EAS assignment.

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) - At least one Public Safety 24-hour answering point, with NAWAS in each area should ultimately have an EAS Encoder to send local alerts to the Area LP-1 station, and all other broadcasters and cable operators that want to receive it directly. (To be implemented at a future date.)

OPERATION OF THE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM

NATIONAL LEVEL EAS

In a national emergency, the White House directs activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to provide the President with a means of addressing the public on very short notice. The activation is accomplished by disseminating an Emergency Action Notification (EAN) message via a dedicated network relaying information to control points of the national Primary Entry Point (PEP) network. In addition, radio and TV broadcast networks, telephone common carriers, Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI), are voluntary participants. Non-participating national stations (NN) so designated by the FCC must go off the air. Participating National Stations (PN) and cable systems will continue as outlined in the appropriate checklist and Part 11 of the FCC Rules and Regulations until receipt of an Emergency Action Termination (EAT) message, at which time all stations will resume normal broadcasting. Stations originating emergency communications shall be deemed to have conferred rebroadcast authority (see Annex C).

STATE-LEVEL EAS

The North Dakota EAS is activated by a request from authorized officials to the State's EAS State Primary (SP) and State Relay (SR) sources. The SP source and the SR source are key with respect to activation of the EAS at the state level. Local Primary (LP) sources in each EAS local area should monitor the above SP and SR sources, according to the North Dakota EAS State Relay Network for further dissemination of State level emergency information to all other stations, cable systems, and the public (see Annex D).

When a statewide emergency exists, those officials designated in Annex A will determine the activation of the North Dakota EAS.

LOCAL-LEVEL EAS

Activation of the Local EAS will be by the National Weather Service or officials as designated in the Local Operational Area Plan. Normally, the request would be made first to the PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point or NAWAS Warning Point), or second directly to the Local Primary (LP1) source serving the affected area(s).

Upon receipt of an Operational (Local) Area EAS request for activation, all broadcast stations and cable systems, who are voluntarily participating may conduct, at the discretion of management, operations in accordance with the provisions of the State EAS or operational area Plan. EAS may be activated for day-to-day emergencies posing a threat to life or property.

For unique emergency situations involving local areas, authorities may request EAS activation through the Local Primary (LP) source serving the affected EAS local area as a backup to the Operational Area PSAP. The Operational Area PSAP is the primary EAS access point for local officials during civil emergency/evacuation type situations. Should an EAS activation request be made directly to an LP-1 or other broadcast/cable source, *EAS activation must be specifically requested* by the local activation authority.

WEATHER EAS PROCEDURES

When a severe weather WATCH is issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) for the State of North Dakota, stations and cable operators in North Dakota can receive hard copy of the WATCH over any of the following teletype networks: Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI) or the NOAA Weather Wire.

When a severe weather WARNING is issued, the NWS will notify the SP and SR sources through NOAA Weather Radio or other communications (see Annex E and Annex F). An EAS Activation received from the NWS should be retransmitted with out modification. This will permit other stations to detect duplicate messages.

PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Authorized state and local officials may request the activation of the EAS for many varieties of life and/or property-threatening emergencies. Guidelines for using the EAS to distribute warning information include, but are not limited to:

- **Public Safety is at Stake** – Information to be broadcast will aid in reducing the loss of life and/or the substantial loss of property.
- **Time Critical** – Immediate public knowledge and/or action is necessary to avoid adverse impacts from an occurring or imminent emergency event. Emergency information for public consumption *that is not time critical* should be distributed via public service announcements at the convenience of the broadcast and cable industry.
- **Supports the Overall State and/or Local Warning Plan** – EAS activation should be made as part of the overall warning plan. No element of a warning plan, to include EAS activation, should be initiated as a “stand alone” procedure. For example, outdoor warning sirens can alert the public that *some emergency* is occurring in the jurisdiction, but will not inform the public about what is happening and what they need to do to protect themselves. EAS activation can fulfill this void. By the same token, activating EAS by itself will not alert those people outdoors that they should tune into a broadcast or cable source for warning information. Outdoor sirens can queue the public to do so.

State activations will be initiated primarily from the State EOC located at Fraine Barracks, Bismarck, ND; secondarily from KFYZ-AM in Bismarck; and last from the Bismarck/ Burleigh County Combined Communications center. Local activations will be initiated primarily from the Operational Area PSAP serving each Operational Area, and secondarily from the LP-1 station serving each Operational Area or the National Weather Service NOAA Weather Radio Alert System. Should a local situation require the activation of EAS in jurisdictions or sources from multiple Operational Areas, this activation will be coordinated via NAWAS between each Operational Area PSAP affected.

Upon receipt of a State or operational level activation request, all broadcast stations and cable systems may conduct, at the discretion of management, operations in accordance with the provisions of the North Dakota EAS Plan. Day to day emergencies posing a threat to the safety of life and property which would cause activation of the State level or local level EAS include, but are not limited to, floods, heavy snow, high winds, icing conditions, widespread fires, discharge of toxic gases, tornadoes, widespread power failures, industrial explosions, and civil disorders. In some instances, the State level EAS activation will be released from the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to the State PRIMARY (SP) and State Relay (SR) Stations. Local EAS activations will be released from the Operational Area PSAP to the Local Primary (LP-1) and other local broadcast and cable sources.

Interim Activation: When the State EOC is equipped with EAS equipment, the release could come via digital radio links. Until such time designated officials will use the following format when contacting the key station(s):

**“This is _____ of _____ . I request that the Emergency Alert System be activated in the State of North Dakota (local) Operational Area.”
(Followed by a description of emergency situation).**

When the authorized person requests activation of the North Dakota State EAS System, they should provide the following information. This information is also found on the EAS Activation Request Format found in each Operational Area SOP.

- Who the requesting official is.
- A call back request, using a number previously provided to the control point.
- Broadcast details (i.e., live, recorded; immediate or delayed). Program material should be provided covering the following points:
 - What areas are involved, or the entire state.
 - Situation summary (describe the nature of the emergency).
 - Actions being taken by local governments.
 - Instructions or messages to the public.

An authorized official may also activate the EAS through the NWS NOAA Weather Radio Alerting System for **civil emergencies**. The NWS NOAA Weather Radio Alerting System may also be used to back up an Operational Area PSAP if the PSAP has an equipment malfunction. Such requests should comply with the following criteria:

- Submitted to the NWS Forecast Office, controlling the local NOAA Weather Radio transmitter, over the NAWAS system for security reasons.
- Utilize the Activation Request Format detailed in this plan.
- Done only as a last resort (i.e. PSAP EAS equipment malfunction or extreme PSAP staff overload).

An authorized local official may wish to activate the EAS locally through the PSAP for an **observed weather – related emergency** (e.g. tornado spotted by a sheriff). Before doing this, all *reasonable* efforts should be made by the PSAP to provide the NWS with the information necessary to activate EAS via the NOAA Weather Radio Alert System. If this is not possible due to time constraints, EAS activation should be made by the PSAP, with follow-up notification of the activation made to the NWS as soon as possible. This will prevent unnecessary duplication of warning by two sources for the same event.

PROCEDURES FOR BROADCAST AND CABLE MEDIA

Cable providers will be entering the Emergency Alert System as outlined in the Federal Communication Commission's Second Report and Order, Adopted September 24, 1997, as outlined here.

- a. All wired cable systems that serve 10,000 or more subscribers to install EAS equipment and provide EAS audio and video messages on all channels by December 31, 1998.
- b. All wired cable systems that serve 5,000 or more, but fewer than 10,000 subscribers to install EAS equipment and provide EAS audio and video messages on all channels by October 1, 2002
- c. All wired cable systems that server fewer than 5,000 subscribers either to provide the national level EAS message on all programmed channels -- including the required testing -- or to install EAS equipment and provide a video interrupt and audio alert on all programmed channels and EAS audio and video messages on at least one programmed channel by October 1, 2002.

Upon receipt of a request to activate the EAS at the State level or operational level by civil authority, the operator at the State Primary Source will authenticate and begin recording, if necessary, all emergency messages and proceed as follows:

1. Broadcast the following announcement:

“We interrupt this program to provide the following emergency instructions.”

2. Transmit the Emergency Alert System header codes and Attention Signal (see Annex H).
3. Broadcast the following announcement and broadcast the emergency material:

“We interrupt this program to activate the Emergency Alert System in the State of North Dakota at the request of _____. The emergency situation is _____ and affects (entire state, portion of state).”

Repeat nature of emergency to allow time for other broadcasters to respond.

4. Broadcast the emergency information or common program as received from the activating official. Include the source of information and the time received.
5. Repeat as necessary.
6. When received, broadcast Emergency Action Termination by making the following announcement:

“This concludes emergency programming under the North Dakota State Emergency Alert System. All broadcast stations and cable systems may now resume normal operations.”

7. Send the End of Message (EOM) code (FCC Regulations, Sec. 11.31).
8. Log or record all activity of the EAS system per FCC Regulations (Sec.11.55).

Each broadcast station and cable system, upon receipt of a State Level or operational level emergency action notification will perform, at the discretion of management, the same procedures outlined above. The emergency information may be automatically or manually rebroadcast (FCC Rules, Sec II.51k) from the monitored source or the information may be presented by station personnel.

Television stations shall transmit a visual message containing the Originator, Event, Location, and valid time period of an EAS message. If the message is a video crawl, it shall be displayed at the TOP of the television screen or where it will not interfere with other visual messages. (Requirements for cable systems are outlined in FCC rules, Sec. 11.51g.)

Broadcasters and cable systems have the option of transmitting only the EAS header and EOM codes without the attention signal and emergency announcement. This is acceptable to quickly relay EAS coded messages through areas unaffected by the emergency.

MEDIA EAS ACTIVITIES

NOTE: An EAS Activation received from the NWS should be retransmitted with out modification. This will permit other stations to detect duplicate messages

Monitor the primary station designated as the LP-1 (see Annex B and Annex I) for your Operational Area for receipt of any further instructions. When possible, monitor the NOAA Weather Radio frequency serving your area. Where NOAA reception is not possible, monitor the state relay network. LP-I stations should monitor NOAA and a State Primary or State Relay frequency and a local public safety frequency, when it is assigned.

MEDIA RESPONSIBILITIES

NOTE: An EAS Activation received from the NWS should be retransmitted with out modification. This will permit other stations to detect duplicate messages

The State Primary, State Relay, and LP-1 stations should monitor the NP/SP to provide the required national EAS link to the system.

A procedure should be developed by the stations for discontinuing normal operations and broadcasting the alert message, live or recorded either automatically or manually as permitted in the rules (FCC rules, Sec. 11.51)

After receiving notification of the termination of the State-level EAS, participating media may resume regular operations in accordance with their authorization (see EAS Checklist). During emergencies, operation outside normal parameters is allowed. Such operations should be logged.

Each station should insure that required EAS equipment is properly installed and programmed with appropriate event codes.

TESTS

Assure that EAS equipment is operating properly.

1. All stations are required to record information relevant to all EAS tests (FCC rules, Sec 11.61).
2. All stations (except Class D FM and Low Power television) must transmit, once a week at random days and times, a Required Weekly Test (RWT) consisting of EAS Header Codes and EOM codes.

3. All stations must transmit a required monthly test (RMT) consisting of EAS Header Codes, Attention Signal, Test Script, and EOM code within 15 minutes of receipt of a test (Class D FM and Low Power TV transmit only the test script).

Tests of State Emergency Alert facilities, as coordinated between the North Dakota SECC Co-chair and State officials, shall be on a random or scheduled basis from a point which would originate the common emergency program.

4. The following requirements regarding both RWT's and RMT's apply to all cable operators and all broadcasters, "PN", as well as "NN" stations. Even stations that have elected not to participate in local EAS alerts, must still rebroadcast the RMT every month. There are two exceptions to these rules. First, Class "D" FM and LPTV stations need not have an EAS Encoder. They must have an EAS Decoder. Thus, these stations are exempt from running the weekly digital code RWT test. However, they must retransmit monthly RMT tests as outlined below, minus the EAS Header Codes and Attention Signal. In addition, LPTV stations must present all EAS information visually, just as all other TV stations must do. The second exception is for FM Translator and TV Translator stations, which are not required to have any EAS equipment.
5. Required Weekly Test (RWT)
 - a. Transmission: All broadcasters and cable operators must transmit an RWT once each week at random days and times except for the week of the RMT test. There are no time-of-day restrictions. This is a 10.5-second test, consisting only of the EAS Header and End-of-Message Codes.
 - b. Reception: All broadcasters and cable operators receiving a RWT from one of their monitored sources must log receipt of this test. No further action is required.
- 6 Required Monthly Test (RMT)
 - a. Transmission: RMT's are to be initiated by the PEP, Local PSAP, or State Emergency Operation Center. These tests will originate on a rotating basis. The schedule will be setup in advance by the North Dakota Broadcasters Association (NDBA) and all will be notified of the schedule. The PEP tests the National, State EOC tests the state system and the Local PSAP tests local operating area. All stations should have the template for RMT reception set to all of ND plus their local operating area counties.

On the First Wednesday of the month all other broadcasters and cable operators are to wait for this test and then react as described in (d.) below. These tests shall always use the Event Code "RMT", never codes such as "State Test", or "Local Area Test", etc.

b. Scheduling of RMT's/Recommended Time Constraints:

PEP, Local PSAP, and the State EOC are requested to use judgement in the scheduling of times for RMT's. Since all broadcasters and cable operators are required to rebroadcast this test within 15 minutes of receiving it, care should be taken to not put undue hardship on TV broadcasters in particular, when they are carrying their highest-revenue programming. On a daily basis, these periods would include all major newscasts: early morning, noontime, evening, and late evening. In addition, the times of major events are recommended to be avoided, such as: pre-planned Presidential speeches, hours of a major national or local news story carried outside of normal newscast hours, local and national election coverage, and major sporting events like World Series games and the Superbowl.

Broadcasters and cable operators who have a complaint regarding the scheduling of RMT's in their area should make their concerns known to their area Co-Chair (see "The North Dakota SECC" section in this Plan for names). If a satisfactory resolution is not reached at that level, the State EAS Co-Chairs should be contacted.

c. Reception/ re-transmission of RMT's

All broadcasters and cable operators receiving an RMT test for all of ND or their operating area must re-transmit this test within 15 minutes of receiving the test. [For Daytime-only stations receiving a nighttime RMT, this test must be re-transmitted within 15 minutes of the Daytime-only station's sign-on.] Transmission of this RMT test takes the place of the Required Weekly Test (RWT). Times should be logged for both the receipt and re-transmission of the RMT test. Broadcast and cable management should impress upon their staff that re-transmission of this test is not an option. It is an FCC violation to fail to re-transmit this test within 15 minutes of receiving it. The best policy may be to set your EAS unit for a 15-minute automatic countdown upon receiving an RMT. If the operator on duty does not send the test manually within that window, the box will do it for him when time runs out.

d. Time-Duration and County-Location Codes to be Used

TIME-DURATION codes used in the EAS Header Code for all EAS Tests shall be "30 MINUTES.

COUNTY-LOCATION codes used in the EAS Header Code for EAS Tests shall conform to these guidelines:

e. Miscellaneous

PEP, State EOC: All tests, RWT and RMT, shall use the Location Code for the entire state.

Local PSAPs: All tests, RWT and RMT, shall include the Location Code for all counties in that PSAPs operational area of responsibility. To determine the counties in their operational area of responsibility, each LP station should consult the "Boundary Map of North Dakota EAS Local Areas", and/or the cover sheet for the "FCC Mapbook", both found in the Appendix of this Plan. (Under the new EAS Plan, some counties have been moved compared to the old EBS Plan.) Please read carefully.

PN and NN Stations and Cable Operators: RMT tests shall be re-transmitted unchanged, except for the "L-Code". Thus, RMT's will include all counties present in the original message. For the RWT originated each week by each PN and NN station, and each cable operator, the county-location code used shall be the county for the broadcaster's City of License, or cable operator's Community of License. Other counties in the station's/system's service area may be added at management discretion.

7. North Dakota EAS Test Scripts and Formats

The following test scripts shall be used by all North Dakota broadcasters, cable operators, and emergency agencies when originating EAS tests.

a. RWT: No script is used for the RWT. Entire test takes 10.5 seconds.

Format is as follows:

- Stop regular programming
- one-second pause
- Send EAS Header Code 3 times
- one-second pause
- Send EAS End-of-Message Code 3 times
- one-second pause
- Resume normal programming

- b. RMT: PEP, State EOC, and Local PSAPs originating this test should use the following format. All other broadcasters and cable operators will receive the test in this format, and must re-transmit it within 15 minutes in the same format. Format is as follows:
- Stop regular programming
 - Optional Intro: **“This is a test of the (Local Area) North Dakota Emergency Alert System.”**
 - one-second pause
 - Send EAS Header Code 3 times (All sources must use Event Code “RMT” for this test.)
 - one-second pause
 - Send EAS Attention Signal (8 to 25 seconds)
 - Read Test Script: **“This is a test of the (Local) or (State of) North Dakota Emergency Alert System. This test is originating from (Local Facility) or (the State Emergency Operations Center), (Local City) or (at Fraine Barracks in Bismarck, ND). In the event of an emergency, this system would bring you important information. This test is now concluded. Broadcasters and cable providers may now resume regular programming.”**
 - one-second pause
 - Send EAS End-of-Message Code 3 times
 - one-second pause
 - Resume normal programming

Timing Note: The script above can be read in 9-10 seconds. All other elements of the RMT (the Header Codes and an 8-second Attention Signal) take from 19-21 seconds to complete (that length depending on the number of county codes contained in the Header). The goal of writing this short script was to fit the entire test into a 30-second time period. PEP, State EOC, and Local PSAPs should make every attempt to complete this test within 30 seconds. Pre-recording the script at the length needed to achieve this goal would probably be helpful.

Script Note: (Local Area) = PSAPs: Use the name of your Local Operational Area found in Annex I Tabs 1-8. PEP and State EOC: Use the phrase, “State of North Dakota”.