

What is EAS?

The [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) designed the [Emergency Alert System](#) (EAS) so officials can quickly send out important emergency information targeted to a specific area. After conducting extensive tests of competing technologies, the FCC ruled that the EAS would be a digital-based automated system and use coding protocols similar to [NOAA Weather Radio](#) (NWR) [Specific Area Message Encoding](#) (SAME). EAS sends out alerts not just to broadcast media but also to cable television, satellites, pagers, Direct Broadcast Satellite, High Definition Television, and Video Dial Tone. EAS also accounts for the needs of special populations such as the deaf and those with special language requirements. In 1996, EAS replaced the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS).

While NWR SAME is the National Weather Service's (NWS) primary entry into EAS, you can receive EAS messages via radio and TV stations and many other media. FCC rules also requires broadcasters to monitor at least two independent sources for emergency information, ensuring that emergency information is received and delivered to viewers and listeners.

Under the EAS guidelines, each state has formed a State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC). The SECC is chaired by a broadcast and cable representative who was nominated by the SECC membership and appointed by the FCC. Duties of the SECC include:

- Presiding over training and workshop sessions
- Acting as liaison with the National Advisory Committee and Local Emergency Communications Committees (LECCs)
- Performing studies to improve emergency communications.
- Developing the [state EAS plan](#) for broadcast and cable media.

The LECC support the SECC mission on a local level. The number of LECCs varies widely from state to state. Each LECC is responsible for an area about the size of a typical county. LECC members include broadcasters, cable operators, emergency management officials, other technological personnel, amateur radio operators, utility companies in the service area, and others who have a responsibility or interest in local emergency communications.

FCC Report and Order amending EAS Rules

On February 26, 2002, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued the [Report and Order amending the Emergency Alert System \(EAS\) rules](#). The Report and Order is available online in html, Acrobat and Word formats. The Report and Order became effective May 16, 2002.

The 56-page Report and Order states the FCC adopted some key provisions of the 2001 [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#), the NWS supported. Significantly, the FCC adopted a critical provision permitting broadcasters to preselect which EAS messages they wish to display and log. Additionally, the FCC adopted a naming convention for old and numerous [new event codes](#), and [NWS marine area location codes](#). The report added several weather event codes that were omitted in the original FCC EAS rules. The FCC also added a Child Abduction Emergency event code for use in connection with local, state and regional "AMBER" ([America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response](#)) Plans.

Broadcast stations and cable systems are not required to upgrade their existing EAS equipment to add the new event and location codes, until they replace such equipment. All EAS equipment manufactured after August 1, 2003 must be capable of receiving and transmitting the new event codes. To provide for an orderly transition to the use of the new codes, NWS Headquarters coordinated with warning partners to develop an NWS implementation schedule and outreach information. NWS Headquarters prepared a fact sheet entitled [National Weather Service and Changes to the Emergency Alert System \(EAS\)](#), dated June 23, 2004.