

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN KEVIN J. MARTIN**

*Re: Review of the Emergency Alert System; 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, EB Docket No. 04-296.*

Public safety is one of the Commission's top priorities. The public must have the tools necessary to know when an emergency is coming and what type of emergency it is. The government's success in enabling reliable and effective communications can often mean the difference between life and death.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is designed to provide a means of warning the American people in the event of a national emergency. The EAS should be capable of disseminating emergency information as quickly as possible. As with every aspect of today's technological revolution, technological changes require us to update EAS to ensure it is a state-of-the-art, next-generation system. As such, it is imperative that this system continually be revised and expanded to reflect new technologies. Shortly after I became Chairman, the Commission expanded the system to include participation by digital television broadcasters, digital cable television providers, digital broadcast radio, Digital Audio Radio Service (DARS) and DBS systems. In fact, the rules regarding DBS systems take effect today.

In today's order, we revise and expand the system once again. Specifically, the item we adopt today makes the EAS system more reliable, secure, and efficient by requiring all EAS participants to be able to receive EAS warnings sent using a common alert protocol (CAP) once that protocol is adopted by FEMA. CAP, which employs an open and interoperable standard, standardizes message formats and enables a digitally-based alert or warning to be distributed simultaneously over multiple distribution platforms. We also expand the scope of participation in the system to include wireline video service providers. It is critical that our public safety rules, like our competition rules, be technologically neutral. Thus, all platform providers should have the same obligations to notify the public of emergency situations. After all, video programming viewers expect to receive an emergency alert regardless of whether they subscribe to a cable, DBS, or any wireline video service.

The order does not stop there however. Although traditionally EAS participants have only been required to disseminate Presidential alerts, today we take steps to require EAS participants to receive and pass along state-level alerts triggered by a state governor. We also require EAS participants to transmit geo-targeted alerts to areas smaller than a state. These actions are critical in ensuring that the citizens most in need of receiving emergency information receive it quickly and effectively.

I am also pleased that the Commission is adopting a Further Notice in this proceeding. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that the communications needs of all Americans, including non-English speakers and people with disabilities, are met in the event of an emergency. I agree that more work needs to be done to address the public safety needs of persons with disabilities and non-English speakers. It is my hope that by the specific questions we raise in these areas, the Commission will be in a better position to adopt meaningful rules that enable these citizens to receive emergency information on a timely basis. I also hope that the industry will continue to work hard to find a way to provide multilingual alerts on its own.

In addition, local public safety officials need to be permitted to activate emergency alerts. Local officials are often best-situated to serve the needs of their own communities. I look forward to finding a way to better utilize and empower local public safety officials as well.

The success of the EAS is dependent not only on the ability of the Commission to adopt the appropriate rules to ensure that the communications systems are capable of sending and receiving alerts to the public but is also dependent on our continued collaboration and coordination with the Department of Homeland Security who is charged with administering the system. We look forward to continuing to work with our federal colleagues as well state and local officials and all the EAS participants to ensure that the United States continues to have a robust, dynamic, and dependable alert system. Timely and reliable communication is most critical in times of crisis. We are committed to expending whatever resources are necessary to do our part in implementing a resilient next-generation EAS system that will effectively serve our citizens for decades to come.