

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE**

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.

The dissemination of vital information and interoperable communications are the backbone of our defense against natural disasters, attacks on our homeland, and even the possibility of a pandemic, health-related, or environmental attack. The truth of this statement was driven home just a few weeks ago in Greensburg, Kansas, where National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasters were able to use the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to issue a tornado warning a full 39 minutes before the 1.7 mile wide wedge tornado hit the town, followed by a Tornado Emergency message 10-12 minutes before the twister hit urging residents to get to shelter immediately. As tragic as the results of that storm were, residents of Greensburg and emergency response officials say that those warnings saved countless lives.

The steps the Commission takes today to improve and enhance the EAS are important ones, and will make the system even more effective. I am proud to play a small role in helping to ensure that the President, the National Weather Service, and state governors or their designees will be able to rapidly communicate with our citizens in times of crisis over a variety of communications platforms.