

Emergency Alert System

While local agencies periodically test the EAS [Emergency Alert System] it has never been tested on a National level. Federal officials want to find out how well the system works on a national level and are planning on 'taking over the air waves' in a yet to be determined date / time. The White House plans on broadcasting a test on all channels simultaneously. The message will be on all television channels and all radio channels so no matter where you tune, you will hear the same message. The EAS is an important alerting tool but it is known to have shortcomings, and the test is not expected to be without flaws, so with everything going on in the world from severe weather to government uprisings, this has the potential to cause panic or overreaction since we are not accustomed to a nationwide broadcast. There may be gaps in coverage or unreliable message distribution so some may hear the announcement and some may not. This test is necessary to identify and address weaknesses in the system. Please, do not be alarmed, the broadcast will clearly and distinctly announce that it is a test, and I trust that the public will not flood the Dispatch Center with calls about what is happening. The date for this test is still to be determined but it's expected to occur in the fourth quarter of 2011, and I suspect you will hear more about the test between now and the actual test. In 2012, the EAS will be supplemented by the launch of the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS), which will provide alert broadcasts over mobile devices without need for the public to sign up in advance. Other new public alerting tools are expected to follow.