FEMA, FCC Conducting System Tests of Public Alert and Warning Infrastructures

Release Date: August 9, 2021

WASHINGTON -- FEMA and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will test the nation's public alert and warning systems at 2:20 p.m. ET on Wednesday. FEMA regularly tests the public alert and warning systems to assess the operational readiness of the supporting infrastructure. The tests also help identify any needed technological and administrative improvements to the systems.

This week's testing will be the sixth test of the nationwide public alert and warning systems and has been planned since June 2020. The purpose of the test is to assess the effectiveness of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to receive and convey a national message via radio and television and of the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) infrastructure to deliver a test message to mobile phones.

The EAS national test is very similar to regular monthly tests typically originated by state authorities. During the test, radios and televisions across the country may interrupt normal programming to play the EAS test message. The message may be delivered in English or Spanish. The EAS test message is approximately one minute long and the audio will say:

"This is a test of the National Emergency Alert System. This system was developed by broadcast and cable operators in voluntary cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Communications Commission and local authorities to keep you informed in the event of an emergency. If this had been an actual emergency an official message would have followed the tone alert you heard at the start of this message. No action is required."

The visual message, which will only be displayed on televisions, may vary depending on the station. The message will include, at a minimum, the originator, event, location, valid time period of the message and the time the message was transmitted. For example, the text may read: "A Primary Entry Point system has issued a National Periodic Test for all of the United States beginning at 2:20 PM and ending at 2:50 PM on AUG 11, 2021 (station ID)."

Page printed at fema.gov/press-release/20210809/fema-fcc-conducting-system-tests-public-alert-and-warning-infrastructures

08/11/2021

The test message sent to the WEA infrastructure will only be received by specially configured phones and will read:

"THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed."

Only phones that have been opted in specifically to receive system test messages will display the test message, which will be in either English or Spanish, depending on the device's language settings. Most mobile phones will not display the test message. In contrast, consumers will automatically receive real emergency alerts on compatible phones (even if they do not receive the test message). Instructions for how to opt-in to receive the test message on mobile devices can be found here.

Through this test, FEMA and the FCC are partnering with various agencies and other stakeholder groups to assess information about the performance of the opt-in WEA test. This includes emergency managers and other stakeholders from the National Weather Service, the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in Texas, City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department, New York City Emergency Management, Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services in California, Ohio Emergency Management Agency, Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, City of Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management, and the Utah Department of Public Safety. In addition, the FCC will gather information about EAS and WEA test performance directly from communications providers.

Information collected from this test will be used to improve EAS and WEA capabilities and testing procedures in the future.

More information about WEA and EAS can be found at Integrated Public Alert & Warning System | FEMA.gov.