



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY



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FEMA, FCC TO CONDUCT FIRST NATIONWIDE TEST OF EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM
MEMA to Coordinate Commonwealth's EAS Test Effort

The United States Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have announced the first-ever national test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) will take place on Wednesday November 9th at 2:00 p.m. EST.

The EAS is a national alert and warning system established to enable the President of the United States to address the American public during emergencies. The National Weather Service, governors, and state and local officials also utilize parts of the system to issue more localized emergency alerts.

The purpose of the test is to determine the reliability of the system and its effectiveness in notifying the public of emergencies and potential dangers nationally and regionally. Similar to the frequently conducted statewide EAS tests, the nationwide test will involve broadcast radio and television services, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline video service providers across all states and the territories of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa.

On November 9th, the public will hear a message indicating, "This is a test." The audio message will be the same for all EAS participants, however, due to the limitations in the EAS the video test message scroll may not be the same or indicate that "This is a test." The text at the top of the screen may indicate that an "Emergency Alert Notification has been issued." This notification is used to disseminate a national alert and in this case, the test. In addition, the background image that appears on video screens during an alert may indicate that "This is a test," but in some instances there might not be an image at all. The test is expected to last approximately three (3) minutes.

FEMA and the FCC are reaching out to organizations representing people with hearing disabilities to better prepare that community for this national test. In addition, both FEMA and the FCC are working with EAS participants to explore solutions to address this limitation.

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Through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Commonwealth has the capability of alerting the public through the EAS system. MEMA serves as the state coordinating agency for disseminating local, regional and state initiated emergency alerts via the EAS. MEMA, in consultation with the Governor's Office, used the EAS to provide emergency messages to the public as recently as June 1, 2011 when tornadoes hit areas of the state, and as Tropical Storm Irene impacted the state in late August.

MEMA will coordinate with our state public safety partners on November 9th to also test our redundant systems for pushing emergency messages to local and state public officials, including police, fire, emergency management and public health. MEMA coordinates a system that includes VHF, UHF and 800 MHz radio communications that link all municipalities; text, email and cellular phone alerting systems for public safety, public health and municipal officials; dedicated direct phone lines with regional fire control centers; and links to law enforcement through the Criminal Justice information System (CJIS).

This event should also serve as a reminder for all citizens to make an emergency preparedness kit for their family and business, develop a strong emergency plan and become better informed about the natural and technological threats to their community.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA and Flooding Issues, go to www.mass.gov/mema. Also, follow MEMA updates on *Facebook* and *Twitter*.