



**Minority Media &
Telecom Council**

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May 9, 2013

David S. Turetsky, Chief
Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Review of the Emergency Alert System (EB Docket No. 04-296);
Recommendations of the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane
Katrina on Communications Networks (EB Docket 06-119)

Dear Mr. Turetsky:

As the leading organization advocating for the full inclusion of minorities and women in the communications industries, we respectfully request the Commission to act on the long-pending issue of multilingual emergency communications.¹

The recently released EAS Test Report² illustrated the need for the FCC to refocus on its efforts to ensure that all Americans are notified of impending emergencies.³ Though the report touted “production of video and audio FCC public service announcements (PSAs), in English and Spanish, with open and closed captioning, regarding the nationwide EAS test,” the test only focused on saving those who speak English. This omission can prove deadly for non-English speaking U.S. residents.

¹ See e.g. Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association et al., Petition for Immediate Interim Relief (Sept. 20, 2005) (“Katrina Petition”), available at <http://mmtconline.org/lp-pdf/EASPetition.pdf> (last visited May 8, 2013); Reply Comments of the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council (June 14, 2010), available at: <http://mmtconline.org/lp-pdf/EAS%20Reply%20Comments%20061410.pdf> (last visited May 8, 2013).

² Strengthening the Emergency Alert System (EAS): Lessons Learned from the Nationwide EAS Test, EB Docket 04-296 (April 2013), available at http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0412/DOC-320152A1.pdf (last visited May 8, 2013).

³ See Executive Order 13407, Public Alert and Warning System, Sec. 2(a)(iv) (July 3, 2006). The Secretary of Homeland Security has the primary responsibility of including “all Americans, including those with disabilities and those without an understanding of the English language...” in warning plans, such as EAS. Id.

David S. Turetsky

May 9, 2013

Page Two.

Eight years and many subsequent natural and manmade emergencies have passed since Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. Promptly after Katrina hit, the Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association, Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, Inc. and MMTC petitioned the FCC for interim relief (“Katrina Petition”), and the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications recommended that “the FCC should... [p]romptly find a mechanism to resolve any technical and financial hurdles in the current EAS to ensure that non-English speaking people or persons with disabilities have access to public warnings, if readily achievable...”⁴

While recognizing the great technological strides made in the past several years, the Common Alert Protocol (CAP), in its current form and all by itself, cannot ensure that multilingual emergency warnings will reach those without access to mobile phones or other non-broadcast devices, since an emergency may silence a market’s only multilingual station.⁵ Further, CAP does not provide the comprehensive information people need during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency - how to seek shelter; where to find food; when it is safe to return; how to be safe upon returning; where to obtain medical assistance; how to find missing loved ones.

Before the 2013 hurricane season begins, the Commission should take up and rule on the Katrina Petition.

Sincerely,



David Honig

President

Latoya Livingston

Senior Attorney and Earle K. Moore Fellow

Jacqueline Clary

Senior Attorney and John W. Jones Fellow

⁴ See Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association et al., Petition for Immediate Interim Relief (Sept. 20, 2005), available at <http://mmtconline.org/lp-pdf/EASPetition.pdf> (last visited April 19, 2013); Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks, Report and Recommendations to the Federal Communications Commission (June 12, 2006), p. 41.

⁵ See Reply Comments of the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council (June 14, 2010), p. 5, available at: <http://mmtconline.org/lp-pdf/EAS%20Reply%20Comments%20061410.pdf> (last visited April 19, 2013).