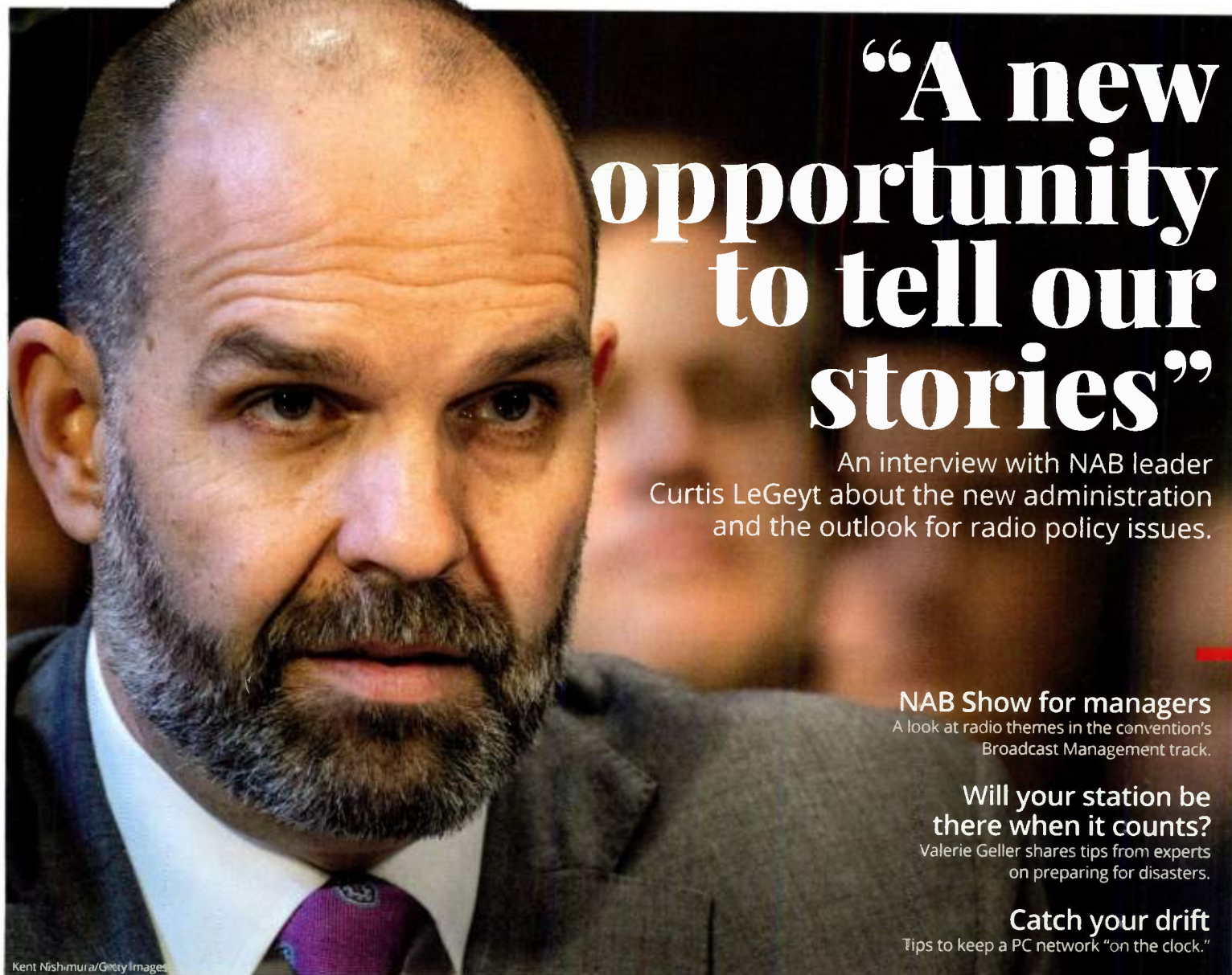


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“A new opportunity to tell our stories”

An interview with NAB leader Curtis LeGeyt about the new administration and the outlook for radio policy issues.

NAB Show for managers

A look at radio themes in the convention's Broadcast Management track.

Will your station be there when it counts?

Valerie Geller shares tips from experts on preparing for disasters.

Catch your drift

Tips to keep a PC network “on the clock.”

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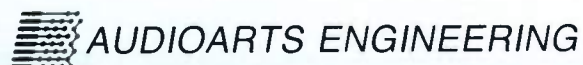
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Writer



Randy J. Stine

The author wrote about the BEACON initiative in Florida last issue.

Broadcasters have “a new opportunity to tell our stories”

Regulatory modernization and the AM bill are among LeGeyt’s priorities

There is hot change these days in Washington. As broadcasters watch all the political and policy developments, nobody is doing so more closely that Curtis LeGeyt.

With the spring NAB Show preview season underway, the president/CEO of the National Association of Broadcasters spoke with Radio World Editor in Chief Paul McLane and contributor Randy Stine about the second Trump administration, the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act, artificial intelligence and more.



Your predecessor was a former Republican senator. You were once a counsel to a Democratic committee chair. Both of you charted courses for the NAB that were pragmatic and mostly apolitical. How are you going to maintain that approach under the second Trump administration, with Republicans controlling both houses and so much partisanship in the air?

Curtis LeGeyt: It’s really important in Washington to know who you are and whom you represent. Whether it’s a Republican or a Democratic

Above
Curtis LeGeyt during a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing about AI and the future of journalism in 2024.

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Correction

Our profile of Megan Amoss in the Feb. 1 issue identified her as a chief engineer; her title is assistant chief engineer.



administration, irrespective of who holds the gavels, the policymakers in Washington are supportive of broadcasters because of the work broadcasters do in local communities.

That work is non-partisan. It doesn't register Democrat or Republican. It registers free and local. We're going to continue to double down on that, especially in light of the way the media landscape has continued to fragment.

There's an awareness on both sides of the need for trusted, fact-based information. That's what we do best. We bring communities together rather than divide them.

In this moment, we have a new opportunity to tell our stories, to remind the new administration of our enduring value.

RW You recently complimented Brendan Carr about his stance on "holding Big Tech accountable," in your words. But

this president and the new chairman have been very critical of how many media covered the Trump and Harris campaigns, and there have been threatening comments about broadcast licenses and networks. You responded to the Trump lawsuit against CBS News and talked about attacks on the First Amendment. It feels like there could be a lot of contention between NAB members and this administration. What should we expect? How do you navigate that?

LeGeyt: We have a long history of work with Chairman Carr, and over the course of his time at the FCC, he has consistently shown an awareness of the role that local broadcasters play in the current ecosystem — the need to level the playing field to allow broadcasters to better compete with the tech platforms and the unique value of what we provide in local communities that no one else in

media is doing. As a result, I'm very optimistic about our ability to work productively with Chairman Carr.

The broadcast industry is in dire need of modernization of any number of regulations, most importantly the ownership restrictions on local radio and television. That's something we see eye to eye with Chairman Carr on; We look forward to working closely with him and this FCC on an agenda that will allow broadcasters to better compete and innovate.

RW But wouldn't you agree that the FCC is not supposed to mess with content? Doesn't it feel like they're starting to talk about that?

LeGeyt: There is certainly a lot of political rhetoric around the content of any number of media outlets, including broadcasters. And we certainly feel very strongly as an industry about the ability of our newsrooms to report the truth, and

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hold government to account without fear of retribution as a cornerstone of the First Amendment.

We are going to continue to defend that right with any administration, Republican or Democrat, and the FCC. But within the four corners of where the FCC has clear legal authority, modernizing regulations that are impeding broadcasters' ability to do that journalistic work is my top priority.

RW Do you expect a different outcome in the next quadrennial review around radio subcaps?

LeGeyt: Chairman Carr has shown a real recognition of the state of the audio marketplace and a willingness to take a fresh look at the ownership restrictions that govern local radio.

line. But we are encouraged by the amount of support for getting the bill passed, and we're very, very confident about where we stand heading into this Congress.

We ended last year with 271 House co-sponsors and 63 Senate co-sponsors, and strong votes out of both the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Commerce Committee. The leads on the bills in those committees are back and control the gavels this time around as well. We are going to hit the ground running.

All of this is driven by the fact that more than 800,000 AM radio listeners from across the country have reached out to their members of Congress to tell them how important it is to get this bill passed to enable access to AM radio and the automobile so that

“There is an awareness on both sides of the aisle of the need for trusted, fact-based information.”

While I'm not going to predict any particular outcome, I can predict that we are going to have FCC leadership that is very open to understanding the realities of the current marketplace and modernizing regulations accordingly.

We've got our work to do in order to ensure that the FCC has the data it needs to make an informed decision on any modifications to its ownership rules. But we're optimistic that we will have the opportunity for an informed conversation, both with the new chairman as well as all of the FCC commissioners and the Media Bureau.

RW What about the AM radio bill? What went wrong at the end of last session?

LeGeyt: Obviously we're disappointed that the bill didn't get over the finish

that is where we're going to focus on going forward.

These chambers are governing with very narrow majorities. It's a high threshold to get any particular issue included in what has turned into a legislative process largely dictated by packages of bills rather than issue-specific bills getting time on the Senate or the House floor.

Our hope will be that we can get standalone votes on both of these bills sooner rather than later this Congress. We're going to be working every angle. We've gotten assurances from leadership on both sides of the Capitol, both Commerce Committees, that the AM for Every Vehicle Act is going to be a significant priority at the start of this Congress. I expect them to

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Above
LeGeyt, center, testified last June before a House subcommittee about performance royalties. He is flanked by Eddie Harrell Jr. of Radio One and Michael Huppe of SoundExchange.

move through consider committee consideration quickly; then we will work to continue to increase the bipartisan support for the bill and get it over the finish. *[In early February the 2025 version passed the Senate Commerce Committee again.]*

RW The AM bill shined a light on how much broadcasters are valued by members of Congress, but carmakers have a huge voice, too. We don't imagine it's going to be easier to slide across.

LeGeyt: I don't think it'll be easy, but let's also talk about the silver lining, which is that we have been working to engage the automakers on the importance of radio in their business decisions over the course of the last several years.

The biggest challenge that radio has is that we are a fragmented industry. Speaking with one voice on the business side is difficult. This

legislation allowed Washington to help supplement that voice, and it coalesced our industry around a cause. Make no mistake, every auto executive knows the importance of AM radio to legislators in Washington and to consumers in a way they didn't 24 months ago. As we're looking at the long game and ensuring radio's prominent place in the dashboard of the future, this legislative activity is going to be helpful, not just for AM radio, but for FM as well.

RW As one of the final acts under Chairwoman Rosenworcel, the FCC released its latest communications marketplace assessment. I imagine you are encouraged by comments from Chairman Carr and Commissioner Symington, who basically scoffed at it and said, "Yeah, we'll have an opportunity to look at this

differently in a few months." They seem clearly in line with your thinking that broadcasting's marketplace is broader than it has been defined in the past.

LeGeyt: There's no doubt that the marketplace is very different, certainly than how the 2018 quadrennial order reflected it.

If I were to sit down at my dinner and have a conversation with my family about the various ways in which they're consuming audio, I wouldn't have to do a whole lot of technical work to convince my parents or my kids that there's a lot of competition for audio attention, beyond just local radio broadcast.

Yet the FCC seems stuck in the past on the way that they have examined the marketplace. We've been extremely encouraged by the openness of Chairman Carr and Commissioner Symington to looking at the marketplace more

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holistically. But we've also had great conversations over the years with Commissioner Starks and Gomez.

This is a rapidly evolving marketplace, and we look forward to working with all four commissioners to talk about modernization of regulations that can help our stations better serve their communities and compete, especially with tech platforms that aren't confined by the same restrictions on scale.

RW If there is a delay in having a fifth commissioner confirmed, what would the impact be? Going back a term, there was quite a gap.

LeGeyt: I wish I had that crystal ball that could tell me the exact timing of a fifth commissioner. *[Subsequent to this interview, Olivia Trusty was nominated, but the timing of a confirmation vote was not known.]*

Lacking that, there are meaningful steps that this FCC can take to modernize ownership regulations and remove some of the obstacles that have prevented stations from innovating and hyper serving local communities.

We know the FCC processes and NPRMs can be voted on, asking questions around a lot of these issues, without a fifth commissioner. We're going to make our case to the seated commissioners on the need for the FCC to move quickly to update ownership rules in particular. It is not partisan to acknowledge that there's been tremendous change in the media marketplace since these ownership rules came into effect.

RW You've cited support for the Local Radio Freedom Act opposing any radio performance royalty.

LeGeyt: That's going to continue to be a priority, because maintaining that firewall in opposition to any new performance royalty on broadcasters is existential.



Above
LeGeyt is shown outside his office at the NAB headquarters. The painting is a remembrance of 9/11 and is titled "Reflect. Unite. Cherish."

That shouldn't be mistaken to mean we aren't willing to be at the table for conversations around a holistic solution that would enable broadcasters to better innovate in a more economical fashion, as listeners are migrating over to streaming.

But the bills that have been proposed by the music industry that are a one-sided new royalty on broadcasters will stifle our ability to serve local communities.

RW You have fought vocally against FM geotargeting and the idea of boosters being allowed to have very localized content for three minutes an hour. The FCC allowed this unanimously, which doesn't seem to give you a whole lot of reason to think you could claw it back. Are you holding to those pretty dire predictions you made, about the impact on

advertising rates as well as interference?

LeGeyt: Listen, I'm grateful for the fact that the FCC heeded our call and slowed down that proceeding, because at the outset, it was moving very quickly with a lot of unsettled questions.

Nothing that the FCC did mandates the use of the technology. I'm sure that there are going to be certain stations that are going to take a look at what competitive advantage they might be able to find through geotargeting.

Based on what I've heard from the majority of my members, I'm not sure there is a lot of interest in that; but time will tell. We are always for new technologies that will allow our stations to innovate better serve listeners, better serve their business partners. If geotargeting can be a part of that solution ... I'm not convinced, but if it can be, I'm eager to see it.

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RW **Radio and TV cannot carry cannabis advertising. There has been some congressional action in the past; the Safe Advertising Act comes to mind in the Senate. That would be valuable dollars for radio to tap into. Could 2025 see a breakthrough?**

LeGeyt: The previous administration was focused on rescheduling cannabis, which does have some impact here, on the legal implications of advertising — in terms of federal legislation that addresses ancillary business issues [such as] banking or advertising.

These laws need to be updated to provide a safe harbor. It's too early to tell in this Congress whether there's going to be the bipartisan consensus necessary to act. These issues are not going to be legislated as a one-off. If there's going to be cannabis legislation moving through the Senate, for example, it is likely to be multifaceted, and the politics are complicated around that.

We'll be at the table arguing for the importance of advertising in terms of allowing consumers to be educated in the choices that they are making [and] the benefits to the public.

RW **We've seen the FCC carrying out the will of Congress by doing heightened enforcement and sweeps in certain markets against radio pirates. But many broadcasters are cynical that it even matters, as long as there is no visible Justice Department enforcement and the government doesn't collect the fines. Is there anything that should be done differently by any of these federal actors that can actually make a difference?**

LeGeyt: I'm optimistic that the FCC as well as the Justice Department will enforce the laws. We were very gratified by the attention that the previous FCC put on these issues and the tools that Congress has provided to go police this. We'll be working closely with the new FCC to ensure

that they're using the resources at their disposal to ensure that our stations are protected.

RW **You put a spotlight on AI at the NAB Show last year. So many in our industry are both fascinated and threatened by it. Where do we stand now, and are we making progress toward creating guardrails, if, in fact, guardrails are needed?**

LeGeyt: AI is going to be an area where you see an even more expanded focus at the NAB Show in April. So many areas of every station's

“ Within the four corners of where the FCC has clear legal authority, modernizing regulations that are impeding broadcasters' ability to do that journalistic work is my top priority. ”

business are being impacted by these new technologies. We want to give our radio members the opportunity to experience these innovations hands on and get an understanding of how we can better use some of these technologies to service our communities.

No doubt, there are significant concerns around our ability to safeguard our content, as it is being used to train some of these new large learning models that are potential competitors. We've got to protect the integrity of our local personalities, those voices that you

know. Our competitive advantage is the trusted relationship that our listeners have with their local personalities in every community.

I worry that the increased prevalence of deep fakes risks undermining that competitive advantage. We're going to continue to dialogue with policymakers about steps to ensure we're fairly compensated for our content.

Congress has had a hard time staying on top of this constant evolution in technology, but we are going to be at the table. There's a bipartisan awareness of the need to put some guardrails around this. But it's also a narrowly divided Congress. We also will be working these issues heavily in the states, some of which may be better equipped to deal with the challenges for the industry.

I see this across the country, at a federal and state level, as a major ongoing focus for this association. Broadcasters need to embrace the technology where it will help increase our reach, but we've got to protect our stations about threats that will undermine our ability to have a business.

RW **Two of the NAB Show's new leaders, Karen Chupka and Sean Perkins, have recent experience at the Consumer Technology Association and the CES show. What do they bring to the table?**

LeGeyt: They bring fresh perspectives and an eye towards growth opportunities.

The NAB Show continues to do a tremendous job servicing our core constituency, local radio and television station groups and traditional media, with the latest technologies. We do that through our more than 1,000 exhibitors as well as an array of programming.

But the media ecosystem expands well beyond that, and we need to capture it. Whether you are a brand that is engaging directly with a consumer through a YouTube channel or a business that's engaging with a would-

be customer through Instagram, you are in media; and there is a want to be educated on the latest tools to better engage your audiences, as well as to network and understand the best means for distribution, monetization, increased traffic.

We want the NAB Show to be the hub to all of that. What Karen and her leadership brings to our team is a real push to think outside of the box as to this broader lens of what industries are in media today, and how we capture their needs.

We're already making significant headway, whether it's in AI, sports or the creator economy, to broaden our tent. I see that continuing under Karen's leadership. But it's important to note that we had a tremendous and experienced team in place, which Karen was fortunate to inherit. She's building on top of that with new talent that brings some new and diverse perspectives.

RW What would you consider to be your biggest win of the past year?

LeGeyt: Meaningful policy-making in Washington is a multi-Congress process. If you look at every signature legislative victory that we've had as an industry over the course of the past three decades, none of them went from fresh introduction to passage in a calendar year.

With that context, what the industry accomplished on the AM for Every Vehicle Act was a tremendous success, building a bill from concept to introduction to committee hearings and then markups, with the support of more than 300 members of Congress. To do all of that in basically a 16-month period was truly phenomenal, and as a result we're really well positioned to get the bill over the finish line this Congress.

The success happened so quickly that it increased expectations that we could get it all done in one Congress. Political reality got in the way of that. But I'm very optimistic we can do it. **RW**



Trautmann Retires

Conrad Trautmann will retire at the end of March from Cumulus Media. Yancy McNair will be promoted to senior vice president of engineering.

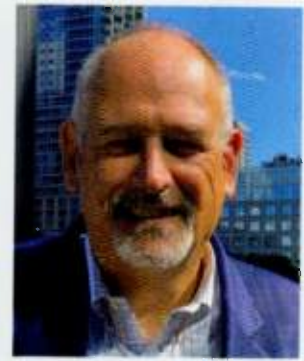
Trautmann is the company's chief technology officer and had represented Cumulus on the NAB Radio Board. He is the latest prominent engineering executive to leave U.S. radio companies in the past year. Others have included Mike Cooney of Beasley; Jeff Littlejohn and Alan Jurison of iHeartMedia; and Rob Bertrand of public radio station WAMU. All have been familiar not only for their work at those organizations but for roles with entities like the National Radio Systems Committee and/or the NAB Radio Technology Committee.

Some of these departures have been retirements, others saw their positions eliminated. All have come against a background of general business retrenchment by major broadcasters. Taken together they represent a notable changing of the guard among the industry's cadre of senior engineers.

"Throughout his tenure, Conrad has been a driving force for innovation and excellence," said Cumulus Media President/CEO Mary G. Berner in a press release.

Trautmann received the Radio World Excellence in Engineering Award in December.

Yancy McNair has been with Cumulus for 21 years, currently as VP of technical operations. He will report to Chief Financial Officer Frank Lopez-Balboa.



Conrad Trautmann



Yancy McNair



Payola Concerns

The FCC in February issued an enforcement advisory, reminding stations that covert manipulation of airplay based on an artist's participation in promotions or events violates payola rules.

"Neither broadcast licensees nor their personnel can compel or accept unreported free or unreported reduced fee performances by musicians in exchange for more favorable airplay," the Enforcement Bureau said in its advisory.

This action came after Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., wrote to Chairman Brendan Carr to "sound the alarm on the exploitative practice of radio stations and networks offering an artist more airtime in exchange for performing a free show. By doing so, these radio stations and networks often reap the financial benefits of these shows through ticket sales, sponsorships and other income while artists and record labels absorb the expenses." She did not identify specific broadcasters.

Blackburn — who is also a sponsor of legislation to require radio stations to pay performance royalties — said the promotional issue is important to Tennessee's songwriters and music community.

Asked to comment, National Association of Broadcasters Senior VP of Communications Alex Siciliano replied: "We appreciate the advisory although we don't believe the FCC has received any actionable complaints. Our understanding is that our members are operating in accordance with the law."



Marsha Blackburn



John Bisset

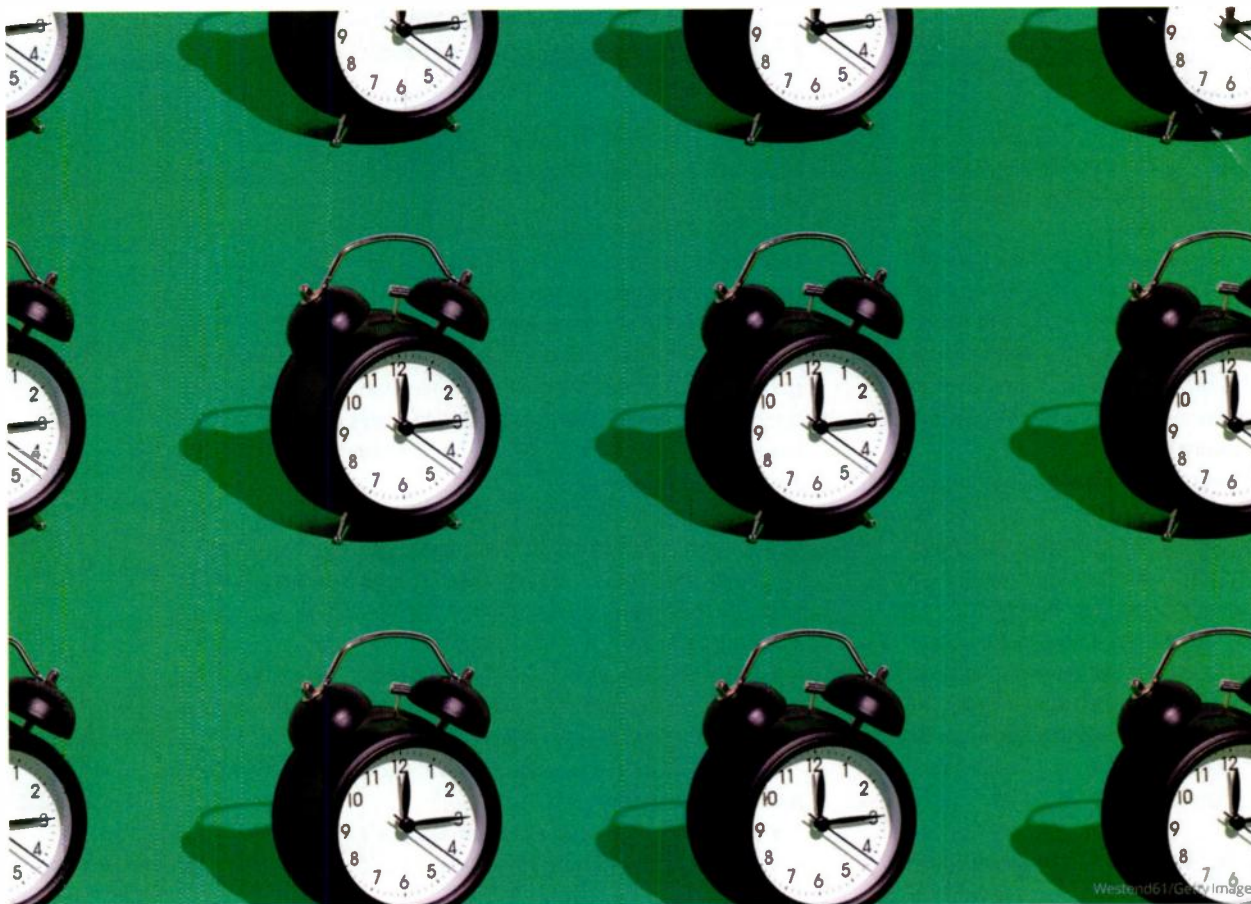
CPBE

The author is in his 34th year of writing Workbench. He handles western U.S. radio sales for the Telos Alliance and is a past recipient of the SBE's Educator of the Year Award.



Tips Please

Workbench submissions are encouraged and qualify for SBE recertification credit. Email johnpbisset@gmail.com.



Catch my drift (and yours, too)

Tips to keep your PC network "on the clock"

As broadcast engineers it often feels like our lives are dictated by time. This is especially true when it comes to computerized audio payout systems.

Frequent contributor Dan Slentz writes that in his experience, Windows PCs have a tendency to drift, even with Network Time Protocol time service to lock onto.

Dan subscribes to a blog called TheWindowsClub, created by Microsoft MVP recipient Anand Khanse. The site is for users of Windows 11, Windows 10, Windows 8, Windows 7 and Vista and discusses issues related to these operating systems.

By default, these Windows versions sync your system time with internet servers on a weekly basis, but you can sync the time more frequently. In a recent post, Dan found good information about how time works on Windows and how you can force PCs to

keep it more accurately. Read it at tinyurl.com/rw-sync (or at www.thewindowsclub.com search for "change internet time").

Paul on Update Blocker

While we're on the subject of Windows, Paul Sagi in Malaysia read the suggestion made in November by Matt Jones to consider the Windows Long-Term Servicing Channel, which prevents periodic Windows updates that interrupt critical 24/7 operation.

Paul says he likes a tool offered by the website Sordum for this purpose. At www.sordum.org search for "Windows Update Blocker" to download.

Paul also shared an interesting blog post by Michael Horowitz about this topic. Michael is a retired computer programmer and blogger; he wrote his first program in 1973. He wrote this post in 2018 but it provides interesting insights about services and tasks associated with Windows updates that can be disabled. At www.michaelhorowitz.com his blog posts are listed chronologically, so scroll

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down to Dec. 5, 2018 to find "Killing Windows Update on Windows 10 — A Cheat Sheet."

Stay connected

The uSwitchPro is an advanced version of the popular uSwitch two-channel IP relay.

The Pro version adds user-customizable GPIO inputs and the ability to activate other uSwitch IP relays either locally or remotely on any network. Simple to use, uSwitchPro automatically builds a control web page, is password-protected and can operate standalone or be controlled via the internet or a local intranet. In addition, the uSwitch Pro has a built-in calendar for scheduling events.

List price is \$180. Find out more at <https://uhavecontrol.com>.

Retro

It's always fun to see what vintage equipment shows up at in the booth of the Society of Broadcast Engineers at state and national trade shows.

Radio World contributor Mark Persons restored the Gates Biamote that was displayed at the Midwest Regional Broadcasters Clinic in Madison, Wis., in September, which he'd purchased at a hamfest. This is a two-channel mixer/amplifier that was used for remote broadcasting in the mid-1950s. The accompanying photos show the unit before and after Mark's loving restoration.

More retro

In the 1990s, Herb Squire, then chief engineer of WQXR(AM/FM) in New York, put together a 22-minute compilation of great-sounding AM airchecks for an SBE presentation. The quality is amazing.



Above left
The uSwitchPro provides GPIO control of devices over a network

Above
Mark Persons at the Midwest Regional Broadcasters Clinic.

Right
The Gates Biamote, a two-channel mixer/amplifier used for remotes.

Bottom
The restored Gates Biamote — and it still works.



Reader Mike Fast rediscovered it recently on the YouTube channel of the AWA Communication Technologies Museum. I suspect you'll enjoy it too. It's at tinyurl.com/rw-squire (or search on YouTube for "1992 AM RADIO Demonstration by Herb Squire CE WQXR").



Welcome the new kings of AoIP.

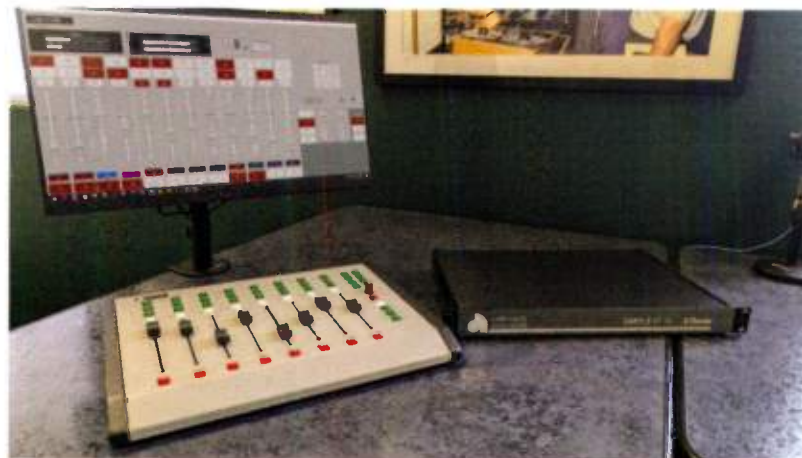
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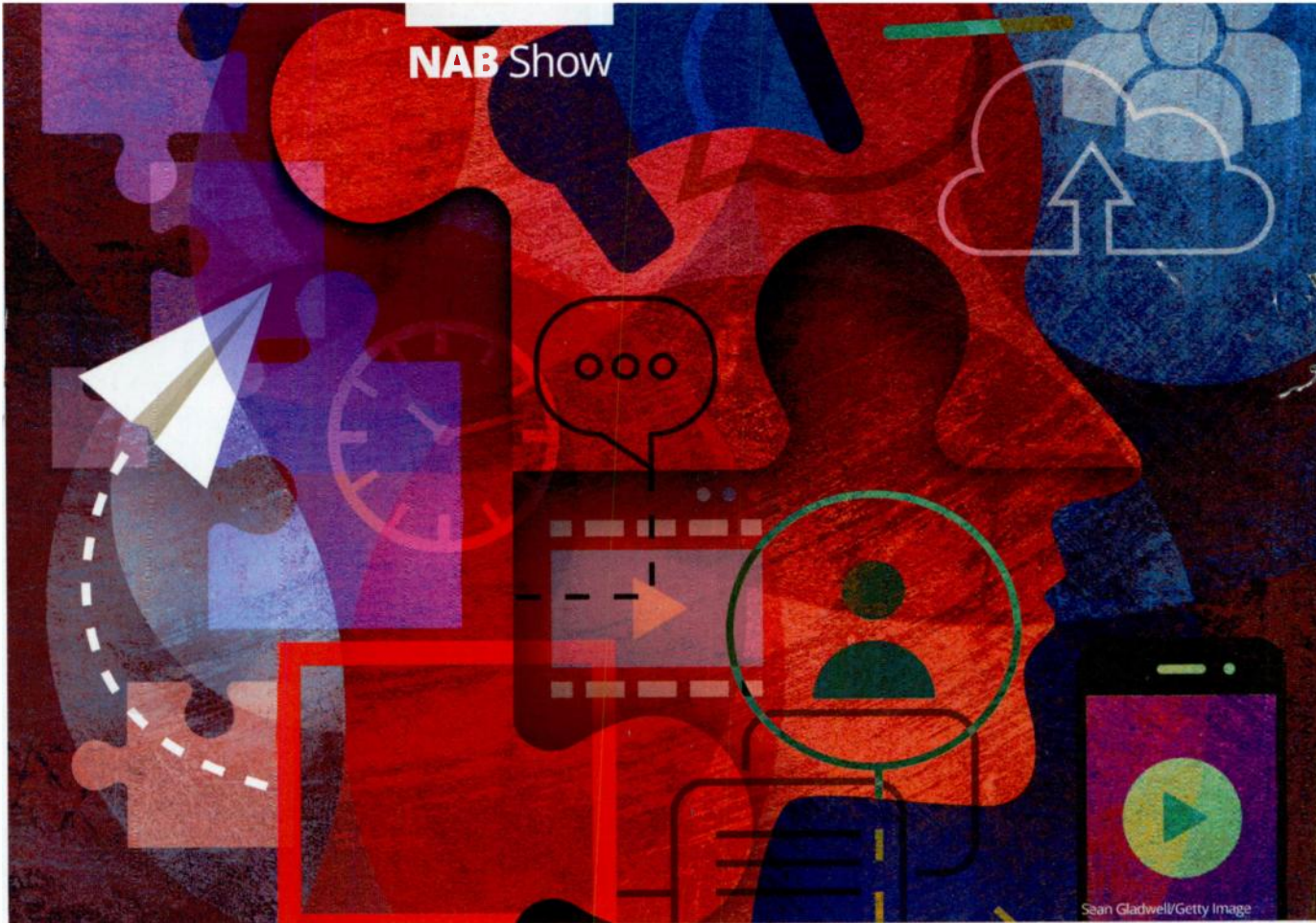
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Writer



Randy J. Stine

Radio World's lead news contributor wrote about the BEACON alerting initiative last issue.



16

NAB Show 2025: Broadcast Management Track

Here's a preview of what's on the agenda in Las Vegas

The cross-platform nature of the radio business — and its competitors — will be very evident in the broadcast management sessions at the NAB Show.

Broadcast Management is a track in the Premium Conference. It includes 60-minute sessions in West Hall conference rooms and 30-minute talks in the TV and Radio HQ in West Hall meeting rooms.

Across the broader show we'll hear a lot this year about artificial intelligence, the cloud, the "creator economy," sports and streaming. Most of those topics also are likely to pop up within the broadcast sessions.

Diving in

Saturday April 5 features the popular "Small- and Medium-Market Radio Forum," in which presentations will touch on AI, podcasting, connected cars, high school sports, data attribution and "lift" strategies.

A talk about the economic outlook by Nicole Ovadia of BIA and Justin Nielson of S&P Global Market Intelligence is likely to be well attended.

Then sessions over the next three days explore a mix of topics.

Refreshing a station's message and delivery is the theme at "Rebranding & Revitalizing Your Station Brand." Buzz Knight, founder of Buzz Knight Media, and Greg Strassell, executive VP of programming at Hubbard Radio, are featured.

Knight says the session will discuss strategies to upgrade a station's brand to better connect with listeners. "We will dig into the intricacies of his thought process on rebranding and share actionable steps that can be put to use in the real world," he told Radio World in an email.

The track will also explore ways for broadcasters to use social media to grow their radio product. David Snyder, head of digital content marketing at Beasley Media Group, leads a discussion about "Using Social Media to Develop Community."



Edison Research says 235 million people are social media users, which includes Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and X. The session will focus on ways for air personalities to extend their interaction with listeners through real-time communication using these various social media tools.

Similarly, content and talent development are the focus of several sessions, which look at broadcasters crossing over from radio to a variety of other platforms.

"Cross-Platform Content Wins — Radio and Podcast Success Stories" will feature Bron Heussenstamm, founder/CEO of Bleav, and Colby Tyner, SVP Radio One & Research Media, discussing how to repurpose content across radio, podcasts, digital and social media to drive audience engagement and improve revenue. Strategic presentation across various platforms, they say, will be critical.

Data, analytics and more

Podcasting is again a theme. The common ground between radio and podcasting creates numerous opportunities, according to John Wordock, president of John Wordock Media LLC and host of the session "Podcasting Trends/Strategies — Tapping into Growth."

Wordock said he plans to identify the "hot trends" in in podcasting. Wordock previously served as executive editor/ SVP at the Cumulus Podcast Network and was executive producer for podcasts at The Wall Street Journal.

John Lund, president of Lund Media Group, will host "Talent Development/Managing Talent Across Platforms."

Lund says the diversity of content platforms places importance on how talent is developed to be effective across different media.

Data collection and audience measurement intersect in several sessions.

Much has been made of Nielsen's change this year to a three-minute qualifier, down from a five-minute threshold, updating how measurement is done in 48 Nielsen Portable People Meter markets.

In "Measurement Metrics that Matter for Radio/ Podcasting," speakers from the Radio Advertising Bureau and Nielsen will discuss this modernization and why they feel it offers a significantly more comprehensive and realistic outcome.

As Radio World has reported, some observers think the change could result in an increase in listener levels of 24% in PPM markets and 10% nationally.

Some radio advocates have lobbied for shorter commercial breaks as a way to boost ratings. In "The Need for Shorter Stopsets," Larry Rosin, co-founder and president at Edison Research, sifts through data that shows why radio needs to make this change.

Meanwhile, "Trends and Data in Radio" with Edison Research Director of Research Laura Ivey, will delve into



Bron Heussenstamm



Laura Ivey



John Parikhal



Tricia Gallenbeck

"Share of Ear" data including information on Gen Z radio listening and radio's role in car.

Tech talk

Although engineers have their own conference (to be previewed next issue), the Broadcast Management sessions touch on tech too with "Engineering Success — How Engineers Impact the Bottom Line."

NAB says although technology is the backbone of radio, it's often overlooked, and engineers sometimes are brought into projects much later than they should.

More on the difficulties of remaining a profitable enterprise can be found at "Managing the Bottom Line," which will navigate industry uncertainty. A panel of speakers from big and smaller stations will discuss action plans they've implemented on the expense and revenue sides of radio. Speakers include Rob Babin, executive VP of radio at Cox Media Group; Tricia Gallenbeck, regional VP with Cumulus Media; and Andrew Rosen, partner at Miller Kaplan.

The final day of the Broadcast Management track includes "The Latest AI Strategies for Radio/ Podcasting Marketing and Programming," which will discuss AI's use in radio and podcasting. As Radio World has reported, AI is being adopted for a range of radio tasks like script writing, audio production and music scheduling. A panel including Dara Kalvort, corporate VP of digital sales and strategy, and John Parikhal, president of John Parikhal + Associates, will offer takeaways and strategies on what's working for radio and podcasts.

Here's a sample of other session titles in the Broadcast Management Track:

"Creating Your Faculty-Broadcaster Talent Pipeline"

"Music Licensing — Broadcast Radio & TV"

"Sports Radio and Podcasting — Where are the Big Revenue Opportunities?"

"Election 2026: Ensuring Radio's Success in the Midterms"

"How to Perfect Your Syndication Approach and Strategies"

"How to Successfully Sell Digital Advertising Solutions"

"Emergency Preparedness Best Practices"

Writer



Valerie Geller

How to be there when it counts the most

Valerie Geller shares tips from experts on preparing for disasters

Valerie Geller's new book is *"Beyond Powerful Radio — An Audio Communicators Guide to the Digital World."*

She devotes a chapter to emergency preparedness. This is an edited excerpt.

Imagine the worst — the recent L.A. wildfires, an earthquake, a blizzard or tornado, a school shooting. If a radio station has limited news staff, and most of the programming is AI, syndicated or voice-tracked, how will you serve your audience if lives are in danger and there's a fast-moving tornado or a toxic spill?

In the United States, stations have failed the public in its time of need. And without advance preparation it could be your city, your station and your listeners.

The answer is to prepare for *anything* that can happen. Have a contingency plan in place so that all members of your staff know what to do when an emergency event occurs.

The very best solution would be to bring back reporting and news coverage. Many of the program directors and managers I work for would be only too happy to restore full-service news departments to their stations, but if they don't have that option, then what?

As mentioned, broadcasters are depending, more and more often, on artificial intelligence. AI is already scraping data from government departments like the United States Geological Service, to generate automatic emergency announcements. These go straight to the EAS. You may already get these types of alerts on your phone. AI is

Above
Firefighters are silhouetted by flames from the Hughes Fire in northwest Los Angeles County in January.

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likely to be more widely used and generate more detailed announcements as it improves. And it will help. Would you, as a listener, care if you hear the first alert about an emergency from a newsroom or AI delivered straight to your speaker, as long as it told you what you have to do?

But even if AI were perfect, in a disaster, the announcement may not make it to stations or listeners' phones. In Hawaii, during the Maui wildfire of 2023, AI-generated announcements were transmitted via cellphones — but the inferno had devastated the cellphone towers. Radio stations were still operating, and, if they had had news people on site, they could have helped deliver potentially lifesaving warnings.

With these real-life experiences in mind, what can broadcasters do to serve their cities on the inevitable day when their communities need critical information?

Even with a small staff, by using a little creativity and pulling together during a crisis, there are some practical ways you can get information out to the public.

Alan Eisenson programmed a cluster of stations in Sacramento, Calif., including news leader KFBK, and talk

team can send its audio feed directly over your airwaves, to your entire station group, including your music stations.

Eisenson also suggests partnering with other radio stations in your market, including your competitors, in times of dire crisis.

Since you can't predict whose transmitter will still be functioning in certain types of emergencies, "Arrange in advance for any stations in your cluster or area that have news staffs to record reports for stations that don't. Have them sent by any method you can get onto your airwaves. You may need to use all of your frequencies to disseminate life-saving information." Offer the same courtesy to your local TV partner.

"And it's vital that you teach your staff, from the all-night automation supervisor to the front-desk receptionist, how to flip that switch to halt your automation or a show in progress so you can go live, or change over to a live feed from your TV partner."

That's not all you'll need to teach your day-to-day operations people. *Everyone* in your building can learn to handle an emergency news situation, should one arise. Just as you train for a fire drill, practice a news drill with everyone in your company so you'll have "all hands on deck" when you need them.

The basic things your staff should know, in case of emergency:

- How to maintain credibility in order to collect, gather and verify that information is correct before it goes to air
- How to get in touch with local authorities on the scene who can give you credible information
- What is the right time and place for listener calls
- What role should social media play in disaster or major event coverage
- How to turn off any automation, take over the controls and broadcast live

Make sure your staff knows that broadcasters need to adhere to the first rule of the Hippocratic Oath, given to all new physicians: "Do no harm."

Credibility and correct information are vital. If someone calls and tells you it is safe to go into a building where a shooting took place, but it turns out one of the gunmen is still inside, you may have made the situation worse. If you broadcast the wrong information, such as reporting on the death or injury of a person who is neither dead nor injured, you cause unnecessary pain and suffering to their families. And there are legal issues.

This is why extra caution should be used when giving names of people affected by a disaster before they have been officially confirmed.

Rita Rich, president of Rita Rich Media Services, worked with the Red Cross as a client. Experienced in producing national talk shows, Rich has also worked network

Continued on page 22

20 **“Have a contingency plan in place so that all members of your staff know what to do when an emergency event occurs.”**

stations in San Francisco. He lived with the reality of a news staff that was a lot smaller than it once had been.

Still, Eisenson prepared, because "Even if you have a skeletal news staff, when events happen, and calls start pouring into the station, the receptionist or board op or webmaster is overwhelmed, and the GM yells 'Do something!', you have to have a plan."

Partnering with TV

Jerry Bell, who spent decades as the news manager of KOA Radio in Denver, Colorado, and Lee Harris, an executive at

NewsNation, a former station owner and 1010 WINS New York newsman, agree with Eisenson on this: You should form a partnership with your local TV news station or digital news services. Do it now.

One of the goals should be to set up your station so that your local TV news

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Jerry Bell's Emergency "Red Binder"

1. *Emergency numbers and contacts (in a place where everyone can find it!).*

Take the time to compile a list of contacts for people with police, fire, hospital, utility companies and homeland security. Get more than office numbers. You need cell phone numbers, and e-mail and Twitter contacts. It will take a little time to get an initial list. But once you have one, test call every six months to make sure the numbers are current. Make sure you have numbers of people who are designated to go on the air.

2. *A map of where staffers live and numbers where they can be reached 24/7.*

Know where your staff lives. Whoever is closest to an event can head toward the scene. Since they work for you, you can trust their information. They can also explain local landmarks and help describe where something is taking place. They may even know people who live nearby. [Remember, not everybody is appropriate to send into an emergency situation.]

3. *Guidelines for crisis coverage interviews.*

Before I list them, let me say that I believe that managers should manage and stay off the air. In a disaster situation management is critical. Listeners should hear voices they are used to. Your regular DJ or talk host can handle the air work. A manager needs to listen to what's going out over the air and make decisions that guide the coverage.

- Stay calm. Take notes and limit speculation.
- When talking to the public, ask what they can see, hear or smell. Does the caller have any expertise to comment on a particular aspect of what is taking place? If someone tells you what they think or believe, remember to say you'll check it out with authorities. Do not accept it as fact.
- Check with emergency professionals on a continuous basis. Ask them about observations

from callers. Take notes. Repeat frequently what you have been told. Scene set every 10 minutes. "Here's what we know right now ..."

- Put yourself in the place of someone who lives nearby. What would you want to know? That's what to ask.
- If possible, have someone screen calls. If that's not possible, put your B.S. detector on. Hoax calls are a possibility. My experience is that young teens and adults in their 20s are the most likely hoaxers.

4. *Basic information about what to do for earthquakes, tornadoes or terrorist events.*

You can get great information from your state office of emergency services, weather service and Homeland Security. They have simple instructions about what to do in a variety of situations. Sometimes this simple information is the best information you can impart in an emergency.

5. *Instructions about when to dump commercials.*

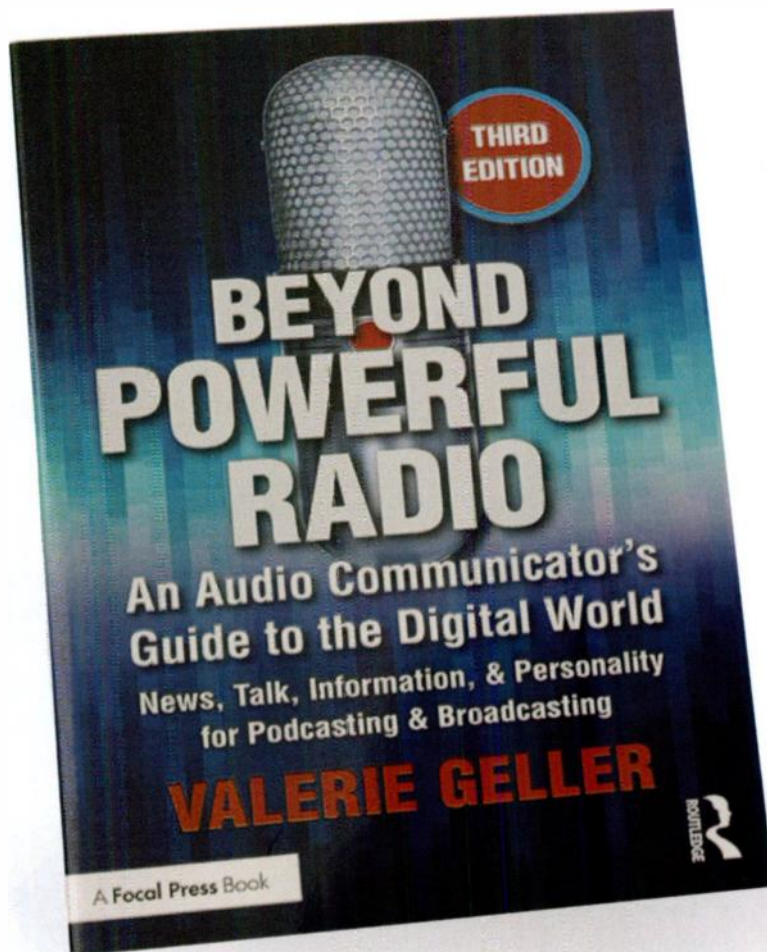
(You don't want to broadcast a spot for an airline in the middle of coverage about a plane crash.)

6. *You need street maps of your area and state. Invest in a good quality street map.*

It helps to pinpoint where something is taking place. Make sure you have a TV monitor in your studio. If there is TV coverage, it helps if your on-air person can see what is happening.

7. *Create a mission statement for what you want your station to do during a disaster.*

If there's a disaster, what do you expect? Spell out expectations. Then provide a framework for decision-making. First order of business is to get a general manager or program director involved ASAP.



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“You should form a partnership with your local TV news station or digital news services. Do it now.”

newsrooms. She maintains you can train just about anyone on your staff to give accurate information in a crisis.

“Teach your station’s staff how to interrupt regular programming and turn on a microphone. In an emergency you will need everyone you’ve got. If you have a very small operation, a ‘Board Op 101’ training seminar should be part of the station basic employment orientation. Make certain everyone on your staff is familiar with news and press releases. Everyone should know where your emergency contact book is located.”

Rich suggests assembling a physical book of essential contacts, with e-mail addresses and text

and phone numbers to call, should the computers go down in an emergency. These contacts are especially important to have:

- County emergency operations center if you have one.
- Local sheriff’s department/police department.
- State police barracks numbers.
- Fire and rescue media relations/public affairs office direct, mobile and home numbers, and social media contacts.
- Department of Homeland Security numbers.
- Emergency contact numbers for public information officers of high-profile locations such as airports, seaports, power plants and utilities.

Rich says your book should also have information on where people will be able to find help. Have contacts for your local Red Cross Chapters and their emergency operations centers. Include first-responder citizen support groups such as the Salvation Army, and local shelters for people and even animals. There may be people unwilling to evacuate in a crisis if they fear for their pets. (Emergency volunteers are a good source of leads for stories. However, most will not be authorized to speak “on the record.”)

If you do not have your own weather expert, know which local weather services your station or group ownership works with. Have the number of governmental offices that handle weather-related emergencies.

Have contact information of local hospital emergency rooms and hospital media relations/public affairs personnel, to find out about casualties.

While instant messaging and other forms of social media can be useful, Rich warns the information must be verifiable.

Jerry Bell recommends that you keep a “how to” guide in your studio for emergencies: Have a plan. Keep it in a red binder marked “Emergency” in your studio. You can also put it on a computer, but what happens when the power goes out? Also, you can tear pages out of a binder if you need to.

A lot of stations already have a printout and/or a computer file of emergency contact phone numbers including cell numbers of firefighters and police, FBI and FEMA. But it’s useless unless everyone in the building knows how to get hold of it. Copies of the emergency plan should also be in the general manager’s office and the program director’s office.

[See more about this binder on page 21.]

The emergency chapter of Geller’s book also discusses press passes, emergency scripts, staff training and other aspects of this important topic.

Valerie Geller is a broadcast and podcast trainer, consultant and talent coach. Text from “Beyond Powerful Radio” is used with permission from Routledge Press © 2025 Valerie Geller.

Above
This story is excerpted from Valerie Geller’s new book. Info is at www.beyondpowerfulradio.com

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Cris Alexander
Director of Engineering
Crawford Broadcasting

NRSC studies RF noise on various roadway types

We asked Cris Alexander to read the report and comment

The National Radio Systems Committee recently published the results of a study on AM

band noise.

The report, principally authored by John Kean, is titled NRSC-R102, "Measurement of AM Band RF Noise Levels and Station Signal Attenuation." It was released in January.

The study consisted of several measurement series conducted along roadways both in urban and rural areas, measuring the signal strength of three different Baltimore/Washington 50 kW AM stations as well as the RF noise on three different unoccupied AM band frequencies.

Measurements were made across five environments: rural, rural-suburban, suburban, urban and dense urban. The results were mostly as one would expect, but there were a few surprises.

One was that field strengths from the test stations were sometimes far below predicted values and that reception in what would normally be considered "quiet" areas was often noisy.

Another surprise, at least for me, was that suburban environments often produced some of the best, most noise-free reception. There were certainly noisy spots as you would expect, but strong field strengths from the stations generally produced good, noise-free listening.

Not surprising, power lines, traffic (possibly electric vehicles?) and electrical equipment were identified as the main manmade noise producers.

That certainly tracks with my own experience. Overhead power lines, light rail catenaries and other power-carrying conductors along roadways have long been sources of hash in AM reception.

Also not surprising, heavily built-up areas tend to attenuate AM signals. Local noise sources within these areas, in combination with the reduced signal strengths of AM stations, often result in reduced signal-to-noise ratios, even making AM reception impossible in some situations. There is nothing new there.



Tweedles and chirps

The report concludes with several recommendations, including strategic transmitter placement, the use of single-frequency networks, improved car AM antenna efficiency and better receiver design.

I would agree with all these recommendations in principle, but some are not practical in many cases.

In recent years, our industry has seen a trend of AM transmitter sites being sold off and the stations moved to locations more distant from the city center. AM tower sites soak up a lot of real estate, and often urban growth has made those tower sites open-space islands in built-up areas. The dirt is worth much more than the radio station.

The result is, in many cases, lower signal strengths in the city, not greater. Stations that used a number of towers in a directional pattern that put a strong main lobe over the city often downgrade to a single tower with a much lower non-directional power level. The resulting reduction in signal levels is predictable.

One source of RF noise in the mobile listening environment not dealt with — in fairness, it is well beyond the scope of the report — is on-board computers and electronics.

Long before electric vehicles were a thing, I began observing this in my travels. I would rent a car with what looked to be a good entertainment system aboard, but it would quickly become clear that reception of even strong AM signals was a challenge.

Two factors were apparently at work. One was the “shark fin” or other low-profile antenna used, and the other was noise generated by the car’s electronics.

My wife’s car is a good example of this. Even our local 50 kW AM station that produces a lot of signal strength has all sorts of tweedles, bleeps and chirps audible in the background. Shut the car off and all those rhythmic noises go away.

In recent years, we have seen what is essentially the same thing with EVs. Motor control electronics, traction motors and onboard computers produce so much hash that some manufacturers have “solved” the problem by removing AM reception from the entertainment system altogether.

Some vehicles, and not necessarily EVs, are rolling noise generators that affect not only reception for their occupants but also affect nearby vehicles. Get stuck in traffic near one of those and you may find yourself switching to FM or some other source.

Clearly most all these things are beyond the control of the broadcaster.

So what is the solution to noise on the AM band? We’re talking about signal-to-noise ratio here, and if we can’t do anything about the noise, maybe we can do something about the signal.



Increasing power would improve the signal-to-noise ratio of any station at any location within the coverage area. AM power is limited in most cases by co- and adjacent-channel protections. I think it’s time that the FCC recognizes — even from the data in the NRSC report that shows even 1.5 mV/m field strengths to be problematic in rural environments — that the 0.5 mV/m protected contour is no longer valid. There’s just too much noise out there to make a half-millivolt signal comfortably listenable in most locations.

Raising the normally protected contour to a more reasonable value — say, 2 mV/m — would permit many stations a significant power increase, and with that would come improved signal-to-noise ratios and better listening experiences.

Would station owners make that investment if they could? Many would, but I suspect many more would not. Still, for those who are willing to make the investment to better serve their listeners, having that option would be a good thing.

The author is a longtime contributor to Radio World and former tech editor of RW Engineering Extra. Radio World welcomes comments about this or any article. Email radioworld@futurenet.com.



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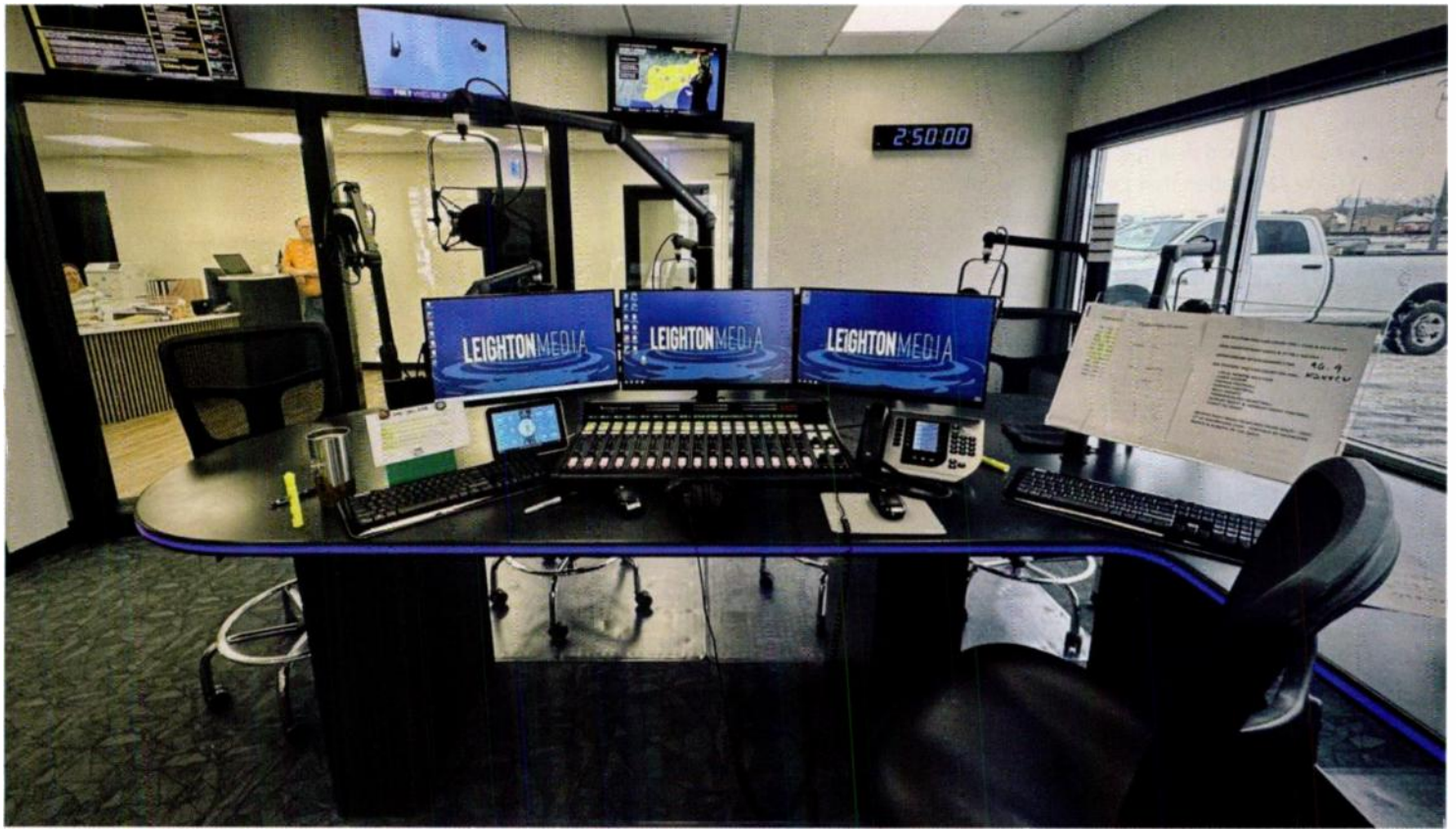
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26

Writer
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Leighton makes a move

Its cluster in Detroit Lakes settles into new digs

Tony Abfalter is director of engineering and IT for Leighton Media, which has approximately three dozen radio signals in Minnesota and North Dakota including FMs, AMs and FM translators.

Leighton Broadcasting was founded in 1963 by Al Leighton in Detroit Lakes, Minn., an area that boasts more than 400 lakes within 25 miles.

Two years ago the company celebrated its 60th anniversary and subsequently rebranded as Leighton Media, reflecting the variety of marketing and advertising

services it offers.

It recently created a new home for its stations in Detroit Lakes, including KBOT(FM), KRCQ(FM) and the first Leighton station, KDLM(AM).

"This project was special because this was our company's original radio market," Abfalter said, and the stations were moving from its original site just north of the city.

"We ended up with three on-air studios, with one being a large AM studio with seven guest spots, and two production studios." He said the company sought

to create a clean layout that can support podcasting and video as well as radio needs.

"The community was extremely involved in the process, not only because we sourced a lot of materials and products locally, but also just the general interest from the community, supporting our radio stations in Detroit Lakes."

Demolition began in 2022 while Abfalter was away at McMurdo Station in Antarctica. Construction began when he returned and was completed in early 2024.

Above
Ample light in this
air studio.



Amazing Radio Studios 2025




General Manager Jeff Leighton collaborated with Abfalter on the building layout and design. Abfalter and fellow engineer Dave Hartman designed the studios. The integration and buildout were handled in-house by the Leighton engineers, with Abfalter acting as general contractor.

Key components include products from Wheatstone, RCS, Comrex, Yellowtec, Electro-Voice and Broadcasters General Store.

The custom furniture includes an LED illumination strip around the edges, with its color and patterns run by a



NotaBotYet controller, for a little extra flare. And to add a bit of personality in the lobby, the engineering team has installed a tower section with a working beacon and a small retired FM antenna bay, shown at left. "It's definitely a conversation piece when people see it." 

Far left
Racks in the technical ops center.

Left
Quite the lobby ornament!



More Studios

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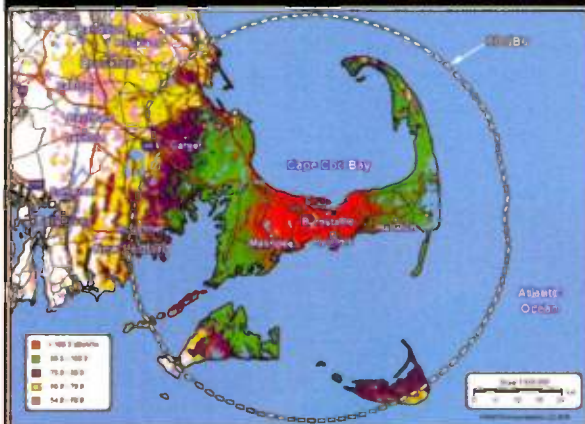
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Writer



Mark Krieger

A structure is gone, its memories remain

We lost a piece of radio history up here in Cleveland last summer

Driving down Snowville Road in Brecksville, Ohio, late last summer, I passed by a 12-acre parcel at 8200 just as a demolition crew was poking through the leveled remnants of a building that had occupied the site for nearly a century.

They may have been gleaning scraps of copper. It's unlikely they knew much about the structure's history.

It had been built to elegant standards in 1929 by the Van Sweringen brothers and Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company to house the transmission facilities of their newly acquired radio station WTAM.

No expense was spared. Stylish faux stone streetlamps lined the driveway. An ornate outdoor chandelier hung above the front entrance of the stucco building, which sat nearly in the middle of the 14-acre site.

Inside were offices, a boiler room and a set of high-power DC generators to serve the new 50,000-watt transmitter, the first of its kind in Cleveland.

For the Van Sweringens, WTAM was merely a hometown public relations flourish. At that moment, they were said to be worth \$3 billion, with massive railroad and real estate holdings. Their stately Cleveland Union Terminal complex — Terminal Tower — would open to the public just months afterward.

The first antenna on site consisted of two 200-foot towers near the east and west property lines, supporting a horizontal, center-fed aerial.

The stock crash of October 1929 set in play a slow-moving economic tsunami that would eventually consume the Van Sweringens. So both they and the Illuminating Company may have been relieved to have the National Broadcasting Corporation remove WTAM from their books in 1930.

New tower

The looming depression had done little to blunt NBC's appetite for expansion. Only three years old, this subsidiary of communications leviathan RCA had already established two profitable nationwide radio networks.

It upgraded WTAM immediately, replacing the inefficient horizontal aerial with a robust single 450-foot tower that is still in service today. WTAM could now be heard from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains, as Cleveland became a linchpin in NBC's Red Network.

Although the main studios and business offices were in downtown Cleveland, NBC saw that nothing at 8200 Snowville Road was less than cutting edge. Following World War II, the network moved quickly to add broadcast transmission facilities for Cleveland's second TV, WNBK Channel 4, and first FM, WTAM-FM 105.7, in late fall of 1948.

Things took a dramatic turn in 1956 when NBC decided to trade its Cleveland AM, FM and TV operations to Westinghouse in a controversial exchange for that company's AM/FM/TV stations in Philadelphia. Rechristened as KYW, the transmission complex was moved to a new, much larger tower on Broadview Road in the suburb of Parma, and the 24/7 comings and goings at 8200 Snowville Road lapsed into silence.

The Smith years

Carl E. Smith, a trailblazer in radio antenna design, saw an opportunity and ultimately purchased the idle property, including the towers.

Smith had achieved early success with his 1934 founding of a technical correspondence school that became known



Courtesy Mike Fitzpatrick/NECRAT.US

worldwide as the Cleveland Institute of Electronics, and as an engineer with Cleveland's first broadcast station, WHK. Contracted by NBC to help get WTAM-FM on the air, Smith went on to build an international reputation for his work with high-power AM, FM and shortwave broadcast and defense-related systems.

By 1958, 8200 Snowville Road would also host both studios and transmitter of a new religious radio station, WCRF-FM, owned by the Moody Bible Institute. Still another FM station transmitter, serving WZAK, would be added to the site in 1964. Catholic radio WMIH(AM)'s studios were hosted for a brief period in the early 1990s.

Meanwhile, the remaining portion of the building served to house Smith's companies, Smith Electronics Inc. and Carl E. Smith Consulting Engineers. He even established his home on an adjacent property.

Among some of the unique features found in and around the building during that period were a fully-screen RF shielded enclosure for RFI/EMI measurements and certification, along with an analog computer designed to produce polar performance plots for AM directional antenna arrays. There was an outdoor turntable with a ground plane, used to rotate antennas in free space for characterization measurements, as well as large vertically polarized log-periodic antennas operating in the HF band. Exotic prototype model antennas hung from the walls and ceilings inside the building, while a large searchlight mounted on the building exterior could be used to highlight the 450-foot tower at night with dramatic effect.

Goings and comings

The 1970s brought inevitable change. WCRF built a new studio/transmitter facility on Barr Road in Brecksville and left the building. Future broadcast tenants on the tower would construct their own buildings around its base.

NBC had managed to reacquire its former Cleveland AM/FM/TV combo in 1965 under the new call letters WKYC. But by 1972, it lost interest in its Cleveland radio outlets, spinning them off to a local group headed by the late Nick Miletti along with associates Tom and Jim Embrescia.

Station 1100 AM thus became WWWE, and 105.7 FM WWWM. After the transfer, NBC wanted WWWE(AM) to vacate its tower due to the technical challenges the combined operation posed. While WWWM(FM) was welcome to stay at the NBC Broadview Road site as a tenant, WWWE 1100 had to go.

So a lease was signed with Smith, a new concrete block building was erected, and WWWE's 50 kW transmitter returned to 8200 Snowville Road in 1974, where it remains to this day. They would be joined by WBNX-TV Channel 55 from 1985 through 2000.

As Smith eased into retirement in the 1980s, Professional Engineers Al Warmus and Roy Stype would continue the

work of CES Consulting Radio Engineers at 8200 Snowville, eventually moving to a new address in Bath, Ohio.

Carl Smith passed in 1998, and the entire site eventually was acquired by Vertical Bridge LLC. Carl's son in law Jim Pollock continued to use the facility for RFI/EMI measurement work until his retirement and closure of the building several years ago.

Today WTAM(AM), WZAK(FM) and WAKS(FM) still operate from the tower, while Vertical Bridge pursues plans to subdivide the site for real estate development. The building is gone now, but its remarkable history and the spirit of those who shaped it endure.

Mark Krieger is a retired broadcast engineer, manager and educator. He worked for a number of Cleveland-area radio stations, was active in the SBE and taught at Cleveland State and John Carroll Universities. 



Readers' Forum



WMIT's Steve McPeters and Keith Pittman are shown with a technician from Carolina Cat who is configuring generator.

WMIT Shone During Helene

I just read the article that Nick Langan prepared on the "extra mile" day and night coverage provided by the staff of WMIT(FM) during and following Hurricane Helene — truly the most devastating natural disaster in our area that I have seen in my lifetime ("The Light FM's Superpower Signal Shines," <http://radioworld.com>, search keyword WMIT).

Thank you, my friends, for the professional and outstanding manner with which you on the Radio World team bring the latest information and developments in the broadcast industry.

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