

POLICY BRIEF

THE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM AND PPM

The “Emergency Alert System” (EAS) is a national public warning system that federal, state, or local authorities may use to broadcast an emergency message simultaneously on all broadcast, cable and satellite media outlets.

In recent years, authorities have expanded use of the EAS for broadcast of regional messages such as child AMBER Alerts and severe weather warnings.

In essence, the EAS is an “open line” that connects all radio stations to each other. The FCC requires all radio broadcasters—AM, FM, LPFM, and satellite radio—to participate in the EAS.

HOW EAS WORKS

Upon activation of the EAS, the system’s “Primary Entry Point” (PEP) stations provide the emergency message to other radio stations via dedicated EAS equipment. The stations’ EAS equipment then synchronize with each other, authenticate the message (via the familiar EAS tones), and broadcast it.

EAS AND PPM ENCODING

We require that a radio station install its PPM™ encoding equipment in its air chain so that it does not interfere with the clarity, reception, or transmission of EAS messages.

The practical effect of this specification is that both the PEP station’s and the retransmitting station’s encoding will always be included in an EAS message. (The secondary station’s encoder stops encoding only during the alert tones.)

EAS ALERTS IN THE DATA

Because all stations in the same general area are likely to connect to the same PEP station, it is reasonable to expect that all of the Panelists in the Metro will be exposed to the

PEP station’s encoding while listening to the EAS message.

Because most EAS messages are too short to affect quarter-hour crediting, the ‘mass exposure’ of a Metro’s Panelists to the PEP station’s encoding should not affect any station’s Average Quarter-Hour (AQH) audience estimates.

Conversely, minute-by-minute audience analyses for the minute(s) that includes an EAS transmission may reflect an atypical increase in audience for the PEP station.

CONTACT

Encoding Support Team 24/7 Hotline: 866-767-7212

For Additional Information:

John Budosh, john.budosh@nielsen.com , 667-786-4552

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