



The **Broadcasters' Desktop Resource**

www.theBDR.net

... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

EAS SENSE

Is Message Flooding Drowning the EAS?



By Richard Rudman

[August 2013] Broadcasters long have had a love/hate relationship with the Emergency Alert System. Being able to know when a dangerous situation occurs – and exactly what danger and where it is located – is a real benefit to stations and listeners.

On the other hand, what can you say when the EAS interrupts programming over and over – as many as a dozen times an hour? Can we get too much of a good thing?

There is a major issue that affects the viability of the relationship between the National Weather Service (NWS) and broadcasters. That issue is “EAS message flooding” by the NWS.

I raised this issue last year in an [Open Letter to the National Weather Service on the EAS Forum](#). However, despite a long series of emails and phone calls with a number of NWS officials, the problem has not gone away.

Just a quick example: this past Sunday, August 18, a station in California’s Inland Empire relayed a full baker’s dozen (13) of NWS EAS storm warnings just between 12:58 PM and 4:47 PM, Pacific Time.

KQIE has received a Severe Thu...	8/19/2013	3:07 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/19/2013	3:07 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/19/2013	1:44 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/19/2013	1:43 PM
KQIE has received a Severe Thu...	8/18/2013	4:47 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	4:46 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	4:05 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	4:05 PM
KQIE has received a Severe Thu...	8/18/2013	3:49 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	3:49 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	3:33 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	3:33 PM
KQIE has received a Severe Thu...	8/18/2013	2:54 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	2:54 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	2:28 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	2:28 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	2:06 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	2:06 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	1:39 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	1:39 PM
KQIE has received a Severe Thu...	8/18/2013	1:37 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	1:37 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	1:30 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	1:30 PM
KQIE has received a Flash Flood...	8/18/2013	12:58 PM	Inbox - .Mac	8/18/2013	12:58 PM

Email notices show 13 EAS activations in under four hours

It could be worse: one afternoon a few years ago in another Southwest city, the NWS initiated ten (10) EAS activations *in less than one hour*, the last one noting “a Severe Storm Warning for” an area northwest of the populated area “and moving west” out into desert where, presumably, few prairie dogs have weather radios.

As a direct result of these activations, that station’s Program Director immediately demanded that only the required EAS tests and national EAN activations were to be broadcast in future.

NOT A MINOR ISSUE

Lost in such demands is the welfare of the station’s listeners. Actually, in the second case, more than one station’s audience was not served – the station involved was the LP1 for the area.

Although some of the EAS events I reviewed from last Sunday contained new information, they also contained a lot of duplicated information, lengthy and wordy boilerplate instructions on avoiding water risks, and verbal recitations of long website addresses. Most ran far too long.

While it is important that broadcasters carry weather warnings, the collateral damage of the NWS message flooding carves lengthy chunks out of a station's programming at random. As can be seen, this has already damaged NWS warning carriage in many markets and looms as a threat to widespread voluntary broadcaster cooperation with NWS for carriage of EAS events.

This needs to be fixed, sooner rather than later.

WE MUST REACH THIS GOAL

The goal – which we need to reach on a national level – is to work with the NWS to alert the public about serious weather risks to their lives and property.

This will give both program directors at stations and listeners/viewers fewer EAS tune-out factors that work against what should be the common goal of all EAS stakeholders.

We know there are technological and operational challenges that stand in the way of fixing this problem. However, I am concerned that not facing up to these challenges now will further damage the EAS relationship between the NWS and broadcasters.

Fortunately, there is good news. Some local NWS offices already are sensitive to the damage

that message flooding can create. But I am sorry to report that based on recent events, nothing has been done to address this issue nationally.

This is by no means an easy problem to solve. However, to the great credit of NWS management in Silver Springs, they responded to the Broadcast Warning Working Group (BWWG) with a promise to – in the a short term – talk to their local Warning Coordination Meteorologists and local NWS office management about the situation and look at a range of long term solutions.

IMPROVE EAS WHILE THERE IS TIME

I know there have been suggestions made for us to add more filters in our EAS devices to alleviate message flooding.

However, as many of you know, there is no way at this time to effectively "filter" EAS life safety weather warnings in EAS equipment without running the risk of missing important events that could help save lives and property.

We encourage stations to be pro-active and try to get their local NWS office to recognize how alerting policy affects stations and work together to make communicate ways to bring effective emergency alerting to the whole country.

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