



Virginia Association of Broadcasters Legal Review



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EAS UPDATE!

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April 23, 2012

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FCC ADOPTS LAST-MINUTE CHANGE IN EAS RULES TO PERMIT USE OF TEXT-TO-SPEECH FOR EAS ALERTS

In a recent legal alert, we reminded television and radio stations of upcoming deadlines relating to the FCC's Emergency Alert System ("EAS"). Among the issues we discussed was the FCC's prohibition, effective April 23, 2012, on the use of text-to-speech functionality in EAS equipment.

Thursday afternoon, a mere four days before it was to become effective, the FCC released an Order reversing course on the text-to-speech ban. In this Order, the FCC, as urged by FEMA and other organizations, has reconsidered its prohibition on the use by radio and television stations, of text-to-speech in EAS alerts and has determined that stations may, in their own discretion, use the text-to-speech functionality of their EAS equipment consistent with the EAS-CAP Industry Group Implementation Guide, which is available at the following URL address: http://eas-cap.org/ECIG-CAP-to-EAS_Implementation_Guide-VI-0.pdf. In short, stations are no longer required to disable text-to-speech functionality by today, April 23, 2012.

To be clear, stations may disable such functionality if they wish, or they may employ the use of text-to-speech if their EAS gear provides such an option. It should be noted that stations are not required to have EAS equipment that contains text-to-speech functionality. Any station that is unsure of whether its EAS equipment has text-to-speech functionality or of how to use it or disable it should contact the station's EAS vendor for assistance.

The FCC's April 19 Order does not change, in any manner, the requirement that beginning June 30, 2012, radio and TV stations will be required to receive and convert emergency alert messages in CAP format for redistribution over EAS equipment, as discussed in previous legal memoranda. Stations that do not already have CAP-

compliant EAS gear installed or on order need to move quickly to ensure they will meet the June 30, 2012, deadline.

We will continue to keep you apprised of further EAS developments.

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If you should have any questions concerning the information discussed in this memorandum, please contact your communications counsel or any of the undersigned.

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