For Immediate Release

FCC PROPOSES ACTION TO IMPROVE VISUAL EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM MESSAGES

WASHINGTON, December 14, 2021—The Federal Communications Commission today proposed action to improve the clarity and accessibility of visual Emergency Alert System messages to the public, particularly to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and launched an examination of broader measures to enhance the system’s overall functionality and accessibility.

First, in a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted today, the Commission proposed rule changes to improve the clarity and descriptiveness of the visual message that appears on television during nationwide Emergency Alert System tests in order to better inform members of the public who are unable to access the test’s audio message.

Second, the Commission proposed to require broadcasters, cable systems, and other Emergency Alert System participants to check for and use, when available, the internet-based version of alerts rather than the legacy “over-the-air” version when transmitting alerts to the public. The Emergency Alert System is comprised of both a legacy broadcast system and an internet-based Common Alerting Protocol system, with the latter offering superior visual messaging capabilities.

Third, in a Notice of Inquiry adopted today, the Commission sought comment on whether the legacy Emergency Alert System architecture can be modified, augmented, or redesigned to enable government alert originators to relay more visual information as part of, or in parallel with, their alert message. The Commission is also seeking comment on ways to improve the legacy Emergency Alert System architecture to enable more functionality within the system as a whole.


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