



Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2007-73

Ottawa, 28 February 2007

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
Across Canada

*Application 2005-0874-9
Public Hearing in the National Capital Region
1 May 2006*

CBC emergency alert service

In Emergency alert services, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20, 28 February 2007 (Public Notice 2007-20), the Commission set out its overall approach to applications for emergency alert services considered at the 1 May 2006 public hearing. Consistent with the approach set out in Public Notice 2007-20, the Commission fully endorses the proposal by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) to provide an emergency alert service. This service would be distributed using the CBC's radio transmission facilities and also offered to broadcasting distribution undertakings (BDUs) on a voluntary basis. No regulatory approval is necessary for the CBC to offer its proposed service using its radio transmission facilities.

In Public Notice 2007-20, the Commission announced that it would amend section 7(d) of the Broadcasting Distribution Regulations. It has called for comments on the proposed wording of these amendments in Call for comments on proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Distribution Regulations, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-21 of today's date. These amendments will permit the CBC's service to be carried by BDUs.

The application

1. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) requested authorization to provide an all-hazard, all-channel emergency broadcasting public alert service. The service would consist of emergency alert messages encoded in accordance with a standard format by authorized local, provincial or federal alerting services, such as Environment Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and provincial Emergency Management Organizations (EMOs). The applicant indicated that it would adopt the standards and protocols currently under development as part of the Government of Canada's CANALERT initiative¹ and that funding for the service would be provided through CANALERT or another government body.

¹ The CANALERT initiative was sponsored by the Department of Industry. It is a partnership involving federal departments, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, and the broadcasting and telecommunications industries, and is responsible for the creation of standards and protocols for emergency alert messages.

2. The CBC would not exercise any control over the issuance, content or frequency of the alert messages. Rather, it would act as the aggregator and the central relay point for the delivery of alert messages of relevance to any particular geographic area. Specifically, the alert messages would be delivered to the CBC's National Alarm Centre in Ottawa, then uplinked for satellite distribution to the CBC's entire radio transmission system. Emergency Alert System (EAS) decoders at the transmitter sites would decode the standardized alert messages, and the messages would be broadcast if they are relevant to the geographic area served by the radio transmitter.
3. The CBC also proposed that cable broadcasting distribution undertakings (BDUs) and direct-to-home BDU operators be permitted to participate voluntarily in the EAS system by installing decoders at their head ends. Upon receipt of an alert message of relevance to subscribers residing in their licensed areas, BDU operators would switch (force tune) all channels distributed on their undertakings to a channel carrying the alert message. The CBC requested that the Commission amend section 7(d) of the *Broadcasting Distribution Regulations* (the Regulations) to permit BDUs to distribute the emergency alerts immediately by relieving them of the obligation to obtain the agreement of the operator of a programming service or the network responsible for the service prior to inserting an emergency alert message into the programming service.
4. Section 7(d) of the Regulations currently states:
 7. A licensee shall not alter or delete a programming service in a licensed area in the course of its distribution except
 - (d) for the purpose of altering a programming service to insert an emergency alert message in accordance with an agreement entered into with the operator of the service or the network responsible for the service;
5. Under the applicant's proposal, section 7(d) would be revised as follows:
 7. A licensee shall not alter or delete a programming service in a licensed area in the course of its distribution except
 - (d) for the purpose of transmitting an authorized emergency public alert message;
6. The CBC indicated that it would provide alerts in both official languages when alerts are provided in both official languages by authorized users of the service. In terms of issuing alert messages to Aboriginal communities, the CBC stated that, conditional upon proper funding, it would undertake to offer text messages translated into Inuktitut, if required.

Interventions

7. The Commission received interventions supporting, opposing and commenting on the CBC's application, as well as on applications to provide alert services by Pelmorex Communications Inc. and by Bell ExpressVu Limited Partnership.² The positions of the interveners with respect to various issues are discussed and dealt with in *Emergency alert services*, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20, 28 February 2007 (Public Notice 2007-20).

Commission's analysis and determinations

8. In Public Notice 2007-20, the Commission set out its approach to emergency alert services. The Commission notes that no regulatory approval is necessary for the CBC to offer the proposed emergency alert service using its own licensed radio networks, stations and transmitters. In Public Notice 2007-20, the Commission announced that it would amend section 7(d) of the Regulations so that it would no longer be necessary for the licensee of a BDU to obtain the prior agreement of the operator of a programming service, or of the network responsible for the service, to insert an emergency alert message into the signal provided by the programming service. The Commission has called for comments on the proposed wording of these amendments in *Call for comments on proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Distribution Regulations*, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-21 of today's date. As noted above, in the present application, the CBC requested a regulatory amendment, the effect of which would essentially be the same as that which would result from the regulatory amendment proposed by the Commission.
9. In Public Notice 2007-20, the Commission has expressed its support for the voluntary dissemination of alert messages by broadcasting licensees. Consistent with that support, the Commission fully endorses the plans of the CBC and encourages it to offer an emergency alert service in accordance with the Commission's determinations set out in Public Notice 2007-20. The Commission further encourages the broadcast of emergency alert messages by the CBC and by any other broadcaster or distributor that might choose to carry them.
10. The Commission expects the CBC to continue its participation on the CANALERT committees. In addition, the Commission expects the CBC to work with alert providers, emergency measures organizations and participating distributors on an on-going basis to ensure that its warning system is effective and responds to the needs of both providers and users.

² Bell ExpressVu Inc. (the general partner) and BCE Inc. and 4119649 Canada Inc. (partners in BCE Holdings G.P., a general partnership that is the limited partner), carrying on business as Bell ExpressVu Limited Partnership

11. Consistent with the approach set out in Public Notice 2007-20, the Commission expects the CBC to provide emergency alerts in both official languages where such alerts are provided in both official languages by authorized users of the system. The Commission also notes that the CBC provides native-language programming in a number of northern communities, and considers that the CBC should examine means of providing alerts of relevance to those communities in the languages of their inhabitants.

Secretary General

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