



Broadcasting Information Bulletin CRTC 2022-232

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Ottawa, 29 August 2022

Distribution of emergency alert messages – Decommissioning of the Alberta Emergency Alerting System and transition to the National Alert Aggregation Dissemination System

Summary

In regard to the distribution of emergency alert messages in the province of Alberta, the Commission informs broadcasting undertakings operating in that province of the decision of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) to decommission the Alberta Emergency Alerting (AEA) System and to transition all broadcasters to the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination (NAAD) System, which is at the core of Canada's National Public Alerting System (NPAS).

In view of the AEMA's decision, as of 1 March 2023, broadcasting undertakings in Alberta that were previously connected to the AEA System will be required to distribute emergency alert messages directly from the NAAD System. The Commission requires distribution of emergency alert messages from the NAAD System by various licensed and exempt broadcasting undertakings, as outlined in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2014-444 and Broadcasting Orders 2014-445, 2014-446, 2014-447 and 2014-448.

The Commission is aware that the AEMA is offering to provide broadcasters with technical and financial assistance in the form of reprogramming services during the transition away from the AEA System.

Affected broadcasting undertakings are encouraged to contact officials at the AEMA to take the necessary steps to connect all public alerting equipment to the NAAD System, thereby ensuring the continued receipt and distribution of emergency alert messages from the NPAS.

Background

1. Emergency alert messages are issued by authorized government agencies and their delegates (such as emergency management officials, or EMOs) for immediate distribution to the public to warn of dangers to life and property (including tornadoes, forest fires, and civil emergencies). These messages contain information relating to the nature of a threat, the area affected and actions that the public should take.
2. The distribution of emergency alert messages to the public is achieved in part through the National Public Alerting System (NPAS). At the core of the NPAS is the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination (NAAD) System, which is operated by Pelmorex Communications Inc. Launched in June 2010, the NAAD System

authenticates emergency alert messages issued by public officials and disseminates these messages to broadcasting undertakings for distribution to the public.

3. Since 1992, the Province of Alberta, through the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), has operated its Alberta Emergency Alert (AEA) System, a system with similar functionality to the NPAS. As part of the AEA System, the AEMA installed equipment in several Albertan broadcasting facilities to enable the distribution of emergency alert messages to Albertans. The AEA System incorporates the messages from the NAAD System.
4. In *Amendments to various regulations, the standard conditions of licence for video-on-demand undertakings and certain exemption orders – Provisions requiring the mandatory distribution of emergency alert messages*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2014-444 and Broadcasting Orders CRTC 2014-445, 2014-446, 2014-447 and 2014-448, 29 August 2014 (Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2014-444), the Commission announced that it had made amendments to certain regulations that made participation in the NPAS mandatory for broadcasting distribution undertakings, radio broadcasters and over-the-air television broadcasters. Further, the Commission announced that it had amended certain exemption orders to incorporate provisions relating to the broadcast of emergency alert messages, and had revised the standard requirements for video-on-demand (VOD) undertakings to incorporate a provision relating to mandatory participation in the NPAS. In that regulatory policy, the Commission considered the distribution of emergency alert messages from the AEA System to be in compliance with these requirements to distribute emergency alert messages from the NAAD System as the AEA System incorporated messages from the NAAD System. As such, broadcasters in Alberta could choose to distribute emergency alert messages received from the AEA System without needing an express reference in the relevant regulations, exemption orders and requirements for VOD undertakings to the AEA System.

Transitioning to the NAAD System from the AEA System

5. In a letter to Alberta-based broadcasters dated 30 April 2022, the AEMA stated its intent to decommission the AEA System and for affected broadcasters to transition to the NAAD System, effective March 2023. It stated that it has transferred all responsibility in regard to emergency alert messages to broadcasters. Consequently, all broadcasters connected to the AEA System feed would need to transition to the NAAD System feed to continue receiving emergency alert messages. The timeline of events provided by the AEMA in its letter to broadcasters is as follows:
 - 30 September 2022 – all broadcasters must have scheduled the reprogramming of their Sage Digital ENDEC (ENDEC) alert broadcast decoders with Trispec Communications Inc. (Trispec);
 - September 2022 to January 2023 – reprogramming of ENDEC alert broadcast decoders by Trispec according to the established schedule;

- 31 January 2023 – final day for Trispec to reprogram ENDEC alert broadcast decoders with AEMA funding; and
 - 1 March 2023 – decommissioning of the AEA System.
6. The AEMA indicated that it would be providing some financial support to assist with the transition in the form of an agreement with Trispec to have ENDEC alert broadcast decoder equipment transitioned from the AEA System to the NAAD System. In this regard, the AEMA will provide broadcasters with technical and financial assistance in the form of reprogramming services during the transition from the AEA System to the NAAD System.

Pertinent contact information

7. Given the Commission’s statement in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2014-444 that “the full participation of the broadcasting industry is important in order for the NPAS to be effective in safeguarding and warning Canadians,” the Commission considers that it is important for affected broadcasting undertakings and the public to be notified of the decommissioning of the AEA System. This information bulletin is intended to notify affected broadcasting undertakings that they should make all required efforts to ensure a seamless transition to the NAAD System that does not leave communities in Alberta without access to emergency alert messages.
8. As the AEMA has made available some time-limited financial resources to assist with the transition, the Commission considers that it is important to ensure that all affected broadcasting undertakings are aware of the finite timeline for leveraging this assistance, which ends on 31 January 2023. The Commission therefore encourages affected broadcasting undertakings to contact officials at the AEMA and take the necessary steps to connect all public alerting equipment to the NAAD System, thereby ensuring the continued receipt and distribution of emergency alert messages from the NPAS in fulfillment of their regulatory obligations.
9. As per the instructions outlined in the AEMA’s letter to broadcasters, affected broadcasting undertakings are encouraged to contact Meghan Thomas, AEA Team Lead, at 780-996-2062 or by email at: Meghan.thomas@gov.ab.ca. The AEMA has made all documents and resources related to the transition available at the [AEA webpage](#) on the Government of Alberta website.

Secretary General