

# **Nebraska State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC)**

**Meeting Thursday, April 21, 2011**

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)  
1300 Military Rd., Lincoln, NE 68508

Called to order by Chairman Jim Skinner at 9:07 AM CDT, followed by self-introductions. See list of attendees at end.

## **1. Developing a Charter for Nebraska SECC**, Janell Walther, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (NPPC).

A charter tells who we are and what we do, states our reason for existing, and opens the door to future steps. A formal procedure exists for developing a charter, and NPPC will assist with developing what we need.

Changes were made in the "Charter" paper presented, specifically in paragraph 2, which now reads:

"The SECC represents Radio, Television, and Cable Systems in Nebraska in the issue of EAS. The SECC works in conjunction with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, the Emergency Management Regions of Nebraska and the National Weather Service."

All of the other changes were deletions, mainly of unnecessary or redundant information.

It was agreed by the assembled committee members that Janell will present the amended "SECC Charter" to the Nebraska Council of Regions (NCoR). The intention is for the SECC to become a sub-committee of NCoR.

In May Janell will attend the SECC meeting and help the committee develop By-Laws. NPPC is following the established practices for Nebraska organizations like SECC.

## **2. Using TOR for Tornado Test—What Is the Real Purpose.** Brian Smith, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service (NWS), Valley, NE.

Brian pointed out the fact that a waiver is now required by the FCC to use the TOR code for a test message. Such use is important mainly for the public, notably during Severe Weather Awareness Week, since the communication systems are working well. But a conflict exists:

**2a. Coordinating TOR Tests With Adjacent States.** Brian Smith also stated that Nebraska and Iowa do not observe Severe Weather Awareness Week on the same dates. (This year Nebraska's dates were March 14-18, and Iowa's dates were three

weeks later, April 4-8.) This creates conflict for residents along the Nebraska-Iowa border, notably in the metropolitan area of Omaha—Council Bluffs, in Sioux City—South Sioux City, and in Nebraska City and neighboring Iowa. Radio and television stations in these areas, which *serve* both states, are requested to carry the watches, warnings and tests *for* both states, leading to unhappiness on both sides of the Missouri River.

The confusion and excess testing causes stations to withdraw from participating in a constructive manner. Building trust in Emergency Alerting is not served well having Nebraska and Iowa drills in different weeks. Cable representatives present agreed that the situation is less than helpful to cable systems participation in EAS.

It was recommended that we return to an earlier arrangement where Severe Weather Awareness Week was observed in Nebraska on the same dates as Iowa. That is the first full week in April.

Brian Smith argues that if severe weather occurs before the test it actually increases the participation and interest. The worst most dangerous storms are usually after the first full week in April.

At the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management (NAEM) convention earlier this month another date than the first week in April 2012 may have been proposed. Bob Eastwood and other NEMA staff agreed to contact Lynn Marshall, President of NAEM, seeking their agreement to coordinate the 2012 tornado test with Iowa.

This subject will be continued at the next meeting of SECC.

**3. April 9 2011 AMBER Alert.** Brian Smith spoke of the AMBER Alert issued early in the morning of Saturday, April 9, concerning a four-year-old child missing from Genoa, NE. There was a problem with the Alert. It was too long, which resulted in its being cut off at the two-minute mark, before a complete description of the involved vehicle could be aired. It was issued with a flaw in its header, which kept it from being routed to the text-to-voice system, making it necessary for it to be read aloud by someone at the NWS office in Valley. The header problem has been resolved.

Brian suggested that Amber messages need to be less than 90 seconds and that the most critical information should be included within the first 60 seconds. The Nebraska Amber Committee (headed up by the Nebraska Attorney General) schedule an Amber Committee meeting after every Amber event. No doubt the duration problem will be addressed.

This raises the question that all EAS alerts need to be limited in length to avoid time-out. There are written Federal and State procedures for writing emergency messages. The SECC wishes to do all we can to encourage those procedures be followed to avoid the 2 minute limit on most EAS messages. Since the two minutes includes digital headers and pauses, the message really needs to be 90 seconds maximum.

**4. EAS Encoder Grant Rebate Program Time-line.** Marty Riemenschneider, President, Nebraska Broadcasters Association (NBA). Mardell Hergenrader, NEMA grants specialist, was called in for this portion of the meeting.

Marty spoke of the rather tight time-line of dates for the various stages of acquiring the necessary equipment for compliance with the new FCC regulations regarding EAS encoders. The list presented was amended, extending the date for rebates to be mailed from July 22 to July 29.

Friday, May 20 – Deadline for stations to submit encoder Rebate Applications  
Tuesday, May 24 – Vendor Request for Proposals (RFPs) sent from NBA  
Tuesday, May 31 – RFP responses due  
Monday, June 6 – NBA e-mail stations about where to order for the NBA price  
Friday, June 24 – encoders must ordered (by stations) *and paid for*  
Friday, July 1 – NBA must receive proof of purchase (copy of paid invoice with model, serial number, etc.)  
Friday, July 8 – NBA starts processing rebate checks  
Friday, July 29 – Rebate check mailing completed

The grant amount is \$400,000, which is to cover one-half of the expense of purchasing a basic EAS encoder for stations in the State of Nebraska. Equipment must be selected from the three models available by the Nebraska Broadcasters Association.

EAS equipment shall be installed and fully operational by the FCC-required date of September 30, 2011. If a broadcaster has already purchased EAS-CAP encoder on or after October 1, 2010, they can apply for the rebate for one-half of the NBA discount price.

It was noted that Nebraska has about 230 broadcast stations, but only about 150 encoders may be needed. Matching funds are available only on a first come, first served basis. Perhaps only half of the available grant money will be needed for broadcasters.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be providing internet server addresses as the time for operation comes closer. Also, stations will be visited by a NEMA inspector to ensure that the EAS box with the right serial number is installed at the location specified.

**5. Possibility of including Nebraska Cable Systems in the Encoder Grant.**  
Alan Tschirner, VP of Technology, National Cable Television Cooperative, Inc. (NCTC)

Alan presented a case for the inclusion of Nebraska cable systems in the grant program. He said that 156 cable systems exist in Nebraska, many of them in smaller localities. Cable is required by the FCC to install CAP/EAS. NCTC is a distributor of equipment and services for its members, which include over 130 of Nebraska's cable systems. Non-member cable operators in Nebraska will also be invited to participate in the grant program if NCTC is chosen as the EAS equipment distributor.

Alan Tschirner offered that NCTC could do all the leg work to contact and sell EAS/CAP encoders to Nebraska Cable systems. They could offer a report and be responsible for discounting or rebating the price on the encoders to Cable. NCTC would not expect profits from the arrangement but would consider it a service to the cable industry in Nebraska.

NEMA administration was not present at the SECC meeting. They will need to evaluate the proposal from NCTC. Also the NBA board of directors will need to consider if NBA can be involved in the cable program as well. Hopes were high at the SECC meeting that details could be resolved to allow cable to participate in the EAS/CAP encoder grant program.

**6. Report from NAB.** Rod Zeigler, KRVN. Rod, fresh from the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) Convention, said that state and local CAP EAS messages will need to pass through the Federal IPAWS Aggregator system. CAP messages should not be sent directly from state or local servers.

At the NAB it was announced by FEMA that an EAS/CAP syllabus will be added to its training for all emergency service providers. It will be part of the normal training programs required to receive Federal disaster assistance.

Rod spoke of a plan "in the works" for grant assistance for carrying "Governor Must Carry" messages on cell phones, iPads, electronic street and highway signs, etc.

**7. Legacy Systems Must Remain Operational.** Rod Zeigler, KRVN. Rod spoke of a forthcoming test of the national Emergency Action Notification (EAN) system. It will purposely be a test of legacy EAS, NOT CAP. Despite the implementation of new systems, legacy systems will remain in use indefinitely and must be kept operational. Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations such as KRVN will remain as such.

Rod proposed that EAS Primary Entry Point (PEP) station KRVN, 880 kHz, Lexington, NE, should be considered to be included in the Nebraska State Plan. However, KRVN does not cover eastern Nebraska after local sunset, when KRVN becomes directional west. NET Nebraska Public Radio and TV stations remain the primary stations for monitoring EAN messages through the NPR "Squawk Channel".

Jim Skinner proposed that the ideal PEP AM station for Eastern Nebraska would be KFAB 1110 AM Omaha. It is unknown whether that is in the Federal EAS considerations. Other PEP stations would not offer a reliable enough signal to Eastern Nebraska to include in the State EAS Plan.

The State EAS Plan will be updated this summer. How to include AM PEP stations will be considered in that process.

**8. Emergency Recovery Plans.** Alan Tschirner, NCTC, referred to the fact that the Reliability Council is encouraging cable systems to develop Emergency Recovery Plans. Broadcasters need to implement emergency recovery plans as well.

**9. New Full Member to SECC Committee.** Marty Riemenschneider as President and Executive Director of the NBA has been active in SECC affairs for years. It was proposed that he be made an 8th member of the committee. Jim Skinner SECC Chair officially appointed him at the April 21, 2011 meeting.

**10. Next Meeting.** Nebraska SECC's next meeting is scheduled for 9:00 AM to Noon, Wednesday, May 18, 2011 at NEMA in Lincoln.

The April meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM.

*Minutes where prepared by Bob Mitchell, Secretary Pro Tem and Jim Skinner, SECC Chair.*

*Updated April 27, 2011*

*See page 6 of 6 for meeting attendees.*

**Attendees Nebraska SECC Meeting**  
**9 AM—Noon, Thursday, April 21, 2011** (alpha, by first names)

Al Krause, NET Network Ops Super – <http://www.netnebraska.org/>  
402/419-6810 – [akrause@netnebraska.org](mailto:akrause@netnebraska.org)

Alan Tschirner, National Cable Television Cooperative, Inc. - <http://www.nctconline.org/>  
913/599-5900 – [atschirner@nctconline.org](mailto:atschirner@nctconline.org)

\*Bob Eastwood, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency - <http://www.nema.ne.gov/>  
402/471-7417 – [bob.eastwood@nebraska.gov](mailto:bob.eastwood@nebraska.gov)

\*Bob Huber, NET Director Network Operations – <http://www.netnebraska.org/>  
402/472-3611, X205 – [bhuber@netnebraska.org](mailto:bhuber@netnebraska.org)

Bob Mitchell, Retired – NE-EAS secretary pro tem – <http://www.ne-eas.org/>  
402/430-6290 – [wb0rjj@gmail.com](mailto:wb0rjj@gmail.com)

\*Brian Smith, National Weather Service – <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/oax/>  
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Brian Thompson, Consolidated Companies, Inc. - <http://www.nebnet.net/>  
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\*Jim Skinner, KPTM / KXVO – NE-EAS Chairman – <http://www.ne-eas.org/>  
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Mark Stottler, Great Plains Communications - <http://www.gpcom.com/>  
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\*Marty Riemenschneider, Nebraska Broadcasters Association - <http://www.ne-ba.org/>  
402/778-5178 – [marty@ne-ba.org](mailto:marty@ne-ba.org)

\*Rod Zeigler, KRVN / KTIC / KNEB / PEP / PEPAC - <http://www.krvn.com/>  
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\* = voting member of Nebraska SECC.

Two members: Bob Richwine and Larry Lavelle were not present due to health issues.