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CONTACT

Dennis Wharton
202-429-5350

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**TESTIMONY OF SAM MATHENY AT SENATE COMMERCE
COMMITTEE HEARING ON EMERGENCY ALERTING**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- NAB Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer Sam Matheny testified this morning at a Senate Commerce Committee [hearing](#) titled "This is Not a Drill: An Examination of Emergency Alert Systems."

Below is his testimony as prepared for delivery.

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Good morning, Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson and members of the Committee. My name is Sam Matheny and I am the chief technology officer at the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). On behalf of the thousands of free, local television and radio broadcasters in your home towns, thank you for inviting me to testify on the Emergency Alert System, how broadcasters fulfill their role as first informers, and how innovation will allow broadcasters to do even more to keep viewers and listeners safe during emergencies.

Broadcasters take seriously their role as the most trusted source of news and emergency updates. Whether it's preparing listeners and viewers for the coming storm, directing them to needed supplies and shelter during the disaster, or helping rebuild in the aftermath, local stations are part of the communities they serve. And broadcasting is sometimes the only available communications medium in an emergency when wireless networks fail. Morning Consult recently found that the American People turn to broadcasters in times of emergency, by a factor of more than three to one.

Broadcasting is unique for the following reasons:

- First, broadcasting covers virtually everyone – broadcast signals reach more of the US population than any other communication medium
- Broadcasting is localized – local broadcast stations can deliver market specific information as well as national alerts
- Broadcasting has no bottlenecks – an emergency alert can reach millions of people simultaneously without concern over network congestion
- Broadcasting is redundant – there are numerous independently operated stations in each market that deliver alerts.
- Broadcasting is resilient – stations often operate with back-up equipment, generators, and fuel supplies to keep stations on the air.
- Broadcaster information is actionable – radio and television can provide enough information to enable people to understand what is happening and what steps they should take.
- Finally, broadcasters are trusted – they are members of the local community and speak not just as an authority, but as a neighbor.

But broadcasters do more than just deliver messages to the public – broadcasters are also the backbone of the Emergency Alert System... Working with the government since the 1950s, broadcasters have operated and evolved a nationwide wireless network to deliver emergency alerts. This daisy chain of broadcast stations ensures that emergency alerts can be delivered independent of Internet connectivity and even when power outages disrupt other forms of communication. In fact, broadcasters serve as primary entry points for emergency communications to the public, and are thus part of the solution from beginning to end.

Because broadcasting plays such an important role in this critical communications infrastructure, it is vital that the government support and foster broadcasting. I'd like to briefly outline three key areas for your consideration.

First, the next generation television standard, ATSC 3.0, which was recently approved by the FCC, has many features that will improve emergency alerting, including the ability to wake up sleeping devices, more precise geo-targeted alerts, and sending rich multimedia files such as weather radar images, evacuation maps, and even video files with detailed explanations about the emergency and what to do. New regulatory hurdles should not be placed in our way as we deploy Next Gen TV.

Second, broadcasters are in the final and most complicated phase of the incentive auction: the repack phase. Nearly 1,000 television stations will be moving to new channel assignments, and this will also impact over 700 FM radio stations on co-located towers. Broadcasters need the time and money required to make these moves successfully, and without impairing the public's ability to access emergency alerts. I ask for your support of the Viewer and Listener Protection Act, sponsored by Senators Moran, Schatz, and eight of their colleagues, and urge its passage as no station should be forced off the air due to a lack of funds or unreasonable time constraints.

And third, broadcasters have been working with the wireless phone manufacturers and service providers on market-based solutions to activate the FM chips in smartphones. Our market efforts have been successful, with one very notable exception: Apple. We believe Apple should be encouraged to activate the FM tuner in future models of their iPhone as it will improve people's access to vital information in times of disaster.

In conclusion, in emergencies large and small, our nation and your hometowns benefit from a strong and vibrant broadcast industry. FEMA calls broadcasting a redundant, resilient and necessary alerting pathway. I agree. Thank you for having me here today. I look forward to answering any questions.

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About NAB

The National Association of Broadcasters is the premier advocacy association for America's broadcasters. NAB advances radio and television interests in legislative, regulatory and public affairs. Through advocacy, education and innovation, NAB enables broadcasters to best serve their communities, strengthen their businesses and seize new opportunities in the digital age. Learn more at www.nab.org.

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