

SEPARATE STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN

Re: Emergency Alert System, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

I am pleased we launch this review of our nation's increasingly outdated Emergency Alert System. We must move quickly to act on this rulemaking and further protect the lives of all Americans.

Our task is not easy, but we cannot afford to wait. The public warning capability of communications technologies should be among the highest priorities of this agency. This will take hard work and continued coordination with the Department of Homeland Security and our other partners.

The Cold-War era EAS system is an imperfect system for our modern society, but for the near term it remains one of the best options we have to deliver emergency messages to as many people as possible as quickly as possible. The Media Security and Reliability Council and the Partnership for Public Warning have suggested ways to improve EAS. The Commission must now buckle down and do what it is we are asking state and local officials to do – assess vulnerabilities, create a plan for better service, and review and update that plan as communications technologies evolve.

The American public expects broadcasters to deliver timely local and national emergency and public safety information. For example, the FCC's broadcast localism hearing in Rapid City, South Dakota, proved how vitally important disaster warnings are for rural areas of the country. The County's Emergency Management Director testified about the cooperation and collaboration among public safety officials and all local broadcasters that resulted from a devastating flood and led to a voluntary initiative to improve public safety warnings in the county. But not all broadcasters and state and local governments have taken this step.

We should use our oversight of the broadcast and other communications industries to ensure more consistency at the state and local level. With the transition of television and radio to digital broadcasting, we have an opportunity to improve upon the EAS system to communicate emergency and public safety information in even more targeted and innovative ways. We can design a system to better serve all stakeholders, including the disability community and the nation's many non-English speakers.

But we must act quickly. In conjunction with our other federal partners, the American public counts on us to ensure a public warning system second to none. It is imperative that we quickly put ideas into action and lead our country to an even higher level of security.