



**NEWS**

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## **Mobile Emergency Alert System Promises Flexible New Option for Emergency Managers and First Responders**

*Demonstration at APCO 2012 Shows How Mobile DTV Broadcasting Will Deliver Video, Audio, Photos, Maps, and Other Vital Information to Millions at Once*

**MINNEAPOLIS, Aug. 20, 2012** – When an emergency strikes, public safety officials need an instantaneous way to potentially reach millions of people at once. On Tuesday, first responders attending the annual conference of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) will get a chance to see how the new Mobile Emergency Alert System (M-EAS) can be deployed to reach millions of people with a single digital TV broadcast.

Drawing more than 5,000 attendees, this week's APCO conference is focused on public safety communications, data security challenges, and emerging technologies. The live M-EAS demonstration takes place Aug. 21 at noon in the Presentation Theater at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

The new Mobile Emergency Alert System is designed to leverage mobile digital TV broadcasting to deliver reliable, rich media alerts anywhere, anytime. Prototype LG mobile phones demonstrated this week offer not only audio and visual indications of emergency alerts, but also include a vibrating mode to notify all users (including those who might be visually impaired) about an emergency. Tuesday's demonstration will show how easy it will be for local TV stations to transmit mobile DTV signals with rich media emergency alert content for simulated national and local emergency scenarios, including a "suspicious package threat," an "approaching tornado," an "AMBER Alert" and "impending tsunami."

The APCO Mobile-EAS demonstration is being conducted with the support of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), LG Electronics (which developed M-EAS receivers) its Zenith subsidiary (which provided technical support and funding for the project), and Harris Broadcast (which equips TV stations with the necessary equipment.) M-EAS requires no additional radiofrequency spectrum and is an additional use of existing TV transmitters and towers. Standard equipment used to upgrade stations for mobile DTV transmission is utilized.

"Mobile-EAS is a powerful new tool for both public alerting and tactical video for first responders, and it's an option that will soon be available nationwide to enhance public safety," said John Lawson, an LG adviser and former member of four FCC advisory committees on homeland security communications. "Harnessing the power of mobile digital TV broadcasting, M-EAS easily overlays an entire metropolitan area with a signal that is not dependent on mobile wireless network infrastructure. It effectively bypasses bottlenecks caused by congestion and will deliver rich-media

content to mobile phones, tablets, and APCO-25 standardized emergency responder radios,” he said

“As technology continues to enhance smartphone capabilities, we’re showing how mobile emergency alerts will be delivered to a new generation of smartphones that are equipped to receive mobile DTV broadcasts as well as telephone and Internet access. We think this new system will be extremely valuable to federal, state and local emergency management agencies and the publics they serve, while extending the community service role of public and commercial broadcasters alike,” said Lawson, who also serves as Executive Director of the Mobile500 Alliance, which represents over 400 commercial and public TV stations planning to launch mobile digital TV service.

### *Avoiding Cellular Congestion in Emergencies*

Using conventional TV broadcasts enhanced with data and mobile Digital TV transmissions, the M-EAS project shows the system’s capabilities for delivering multimedia alerts (utilizing video, audio, text, and graphics) to mobile DTV-equipped cellphones, tablets, laptops, netbooks, and in-car navigation systems in order to avoid the potential roadblocks and chronic congestion of cellular systems during emergencies.

“Our work together over the past year proves the viability of our concept – that mobile television can be an effective way to reach millions of people with a single highly-robust broadcast, without relying on access to an overburdened wireless mobile network. We believe that the new ATSC Mobile DTV system can be harnessed to do far more than just the delivery of linear TV channels,” said PBS Chief Technology Office John McCoskey, who notes that the proposed M-EAS system would also complement the current cellular-based system that transmits up to 90-character text messages to mobile phones.

The Minneapolis demonstration to public safety officials follows a year-long successful M-EAS pilot project where enhanced emergency alerts were transmitted and received through prototype equipment deployed in Massachusetts, Alabama and Nevada. Local TV stations in those markets showed how additional data transmitted with TV signals through digital TV broadcasting could deliver multimedia alerts to the general public and to first responders in times of natural or man-made disasters. Fisher Communications’ KOMO-TV in Seattle also supported the pilot project to create a tsunami alert simulation.

“Our field trials effectively demonstrated that M-EAS can play an integral role in the future of public safety communications, and work is now under way to finalize the industry standard for M-EAS through the ATSC (Advanced Television Systems Committee),” McCoskey said. “This life-saving enhancement to the ATSC Mobile DTV standard is expected to be standardized by early next year.”

Jay Adrick, vice president, broadcast technologies, Harris Broadcast, the largest provider of broadcast transmission equipment and a leader in emergency alert technology, said, “We believe Mobile DTV will be a significant enhancement for local public safety communications because millions of devices will receive alerts simultaneously – just as easily as reception by a single device. Video, photos, graphics of evacuation routes, text and audio can all be transmitted through the system to reach able-bodied and disabled viewers. Indeed, a very similar system saved thousands of lives when alerts went out during the Japan earthquake and subsequent tsunami last year.”

The new alerting application developed during the pilot project capitalizes on existing standards for implementation. The U.S. broadcast standard for mobile television, the ATSC A/153 Mobile DTV Standard, uses Internet Protocol (IP) at its core. The use of IP allows the new application to be flexible and extensible. Data delivery, non-real-time delivery, and electronic service guides are all included.

M-EAS is compliant with the international Common Alerting Protocol and designed for full incorporation into the U.S. Integrated Public Alert and Warning System.

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