I. Introduction

When the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) was first introduced in the 1960s its scope was limited: warn the population of the threat of nuclear attack. Through the years, the EBS became a conduit of passing on life-saving weather information, but the technology became antiquated. Because digital technology was becoming more reliable, the FCC changed the EBS into the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The EAS would mirror the EBS, but provide a more dependable, bottom-up approach in providing emergency messages. National activations, the only time government can override programming, remains the same. However, state and local emergency management officials and broadcasters may decide what messages should be aired to the public. The EAS brings in technology that was uncommon in the 60s - satellite communications, cable television, paging systems, and cellular telephones. It is envisioned the public will quickly grow accustomed to hearing the shortened emergency message, and then tune to their regular news source for the protective action information.

Each year Mississippi is impacted by emergency and disaster events requiring the immediate alerting of residents and visitors providing them with an opportunity to protect themselves and, time permitting, their property. The Emergency Alert System is an invaluable tool that will help prevent the loss of lives in Mississippi.

II. Purpose

The purpose of the Mississippi EAS Plan is to put in place a system for emergency officials to use to announce or transmit an emergency alert to the potentially impacted population. This plan is the FCC mandated document outlining the organization and implementation of the State of Mississippi Emergency Alert System. It is the guideline for Mississippi broadcasters and cable TV operators to determine: their mandated and optional monitoring assignments, codes to be used in the EAS Header sequence in this state, schedule of the Required Monthly Tests which must be relayed by all broadcasters and cable operators within 15 minutes of reception, and any other elements of the EAS which are unique to this state. This plan is an adjunct to the FCC EAS Rules and is not meant to be a summary, in whole or in part, of those Rules. Consult FCC Rules Part 11 for general rules regarding the Emergency Alert System.

III. Authorities and References

- Title 47 U.S.C. 151, 154(i) and (o), 303(r), 524(g) and 606; and 47 CFR, Part 11, Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations, Emergency Alert System (EAS) as it pertains to day-to-day emergency operations. *Note: 47 CFR, Part 11, was amended May 16, 2002. Portions of this state plan have been updated to incorporate the changes.*

- All operations of the Emergency Alert System are in accordance with Subpart G of Part 73, FCC Regulations (Title 47, Code of Federal Regulations; The Federal Communications Commission's "EAS Checklist"). This plan is consistent with the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is considered to be a supplement to the National Emergency Alert System Plan.

- NUREG 0654, Federal Emergency Management Agency, establishes emergency notification requirements for Nuclear Power Plants.

IV. Plan Implementation and Maintenance

The Mississippi Emergency Alert System Operational Plan is prepared by the State Emergency Communications Committee in conjunction with the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and is based on recommendations from state and county emergency management officials, National Weather Service (NWS), and the broadcast industry. The responsibility of administering this plan rests with the members of the Mississippi State Emergency Communications Committee.

This plan supersedes the previous plans for the State of Mississippi Emergency Broadcast System effective October 1, 2017.

This Plan should be reviewed at least annually, after each activation of the EAS, or as otherwise needed. The Plan may be amended or modified by a majority vote of the State Emergency Communications Committee.

Acceptance of or participation in the Plan shall not be deemed as a relinquishment of program control or to prohibit a broadcast licensee from exercising independent discretion and responsibility in an emergency situation. Broadcast stations and cable systems originating EAS emergency communications shall be deemed to have conferred rebroadcast authority. The concept of management of each broadcast station and cable system to exercise discretion regarding the broadcast of emergency information and instructions to the public is provided by the FCC Rules and Regulations.

V. Concept of Operations

A. Planning Assumptions and Situation

1. Coordination of the Emergency Alert System is the joint responsibility of the State Emergency Communications Committee, National Weather Service, and Mississippi's Emergency Management community.

2. This Plan shall be used as a guide for the activation of the Emergency Alert System; the specific event situation may require modification of the system.

3. The success of the EAS depends solely upon the cooperation among the broadcast industry, cable television industry, National Weather Service, and emergency management officials to receive, broadcast, and re-broadcast emergency messages.

4. This Plan must reflect the philosophy and content of the State's Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan.

5. This Plan must be consistent with the EAS process outlined in the State's Nuclear Power Plant Plans.

6. This Plan shall be utilized regardless of emergency/disaster event type.

7. Each Operational Area Emergency Alert System Plan must be consistent with the philosophy of this Plan.

8. This Plan assumes all participants have been trained in the activation of the EAS.

9. The State Emergency Communications Committee recognizes that broadcasters rely on "air time" use to maintain business continuity.

B. Operational Objectives

The EAS program is formulated around two distinct time frames: Preparedness and Response. Preparedness activities should be implemented prior to the initiation of the EAS. The Response phase is the real time activation of EAS. The following Operational Objectives must be accomplished to comply with the FCC EAS regulations and to put in place an EAS program to successfully alert Mississippi's residents and visitors.

Preparedness Objectives

Objective 1: Broadcasters, and State and Local Emergency Managers must become familiar with the Emergency Alert System.

Objective 2: Local Primary 1 and 2 Station Broadcasters and the National Weather Service must conduct or participate in the Required Weekly Test (RWT) of the Emergency Alert System.

Objective 3: Local Primary 1 and 2 Station Broadcasters, and State Emergency Management Agency, the National Weather Service and Department of Public Safety must conduct or participate in Required Monthly Test (RMT) of the Emergency Alert System.

Objective 4: Operational Area Committee shall coordinate activities of the Emergency Alert System with broadcasters, National Weather Service, and local and state emergency management agencies.

Objective 5: Local Primary 1 and 2 Station Broadcasters, and the state and local Emergency Managers must orient the public in the use of the Emergency Alert System.

Response Objectives

Objective 1: National Weather Service or Local or State Emergency Management shall activate the system as quickly as possible upon becoming aware of an emergency/disaster event.

Objective 2: Local Primary 1(LP 1) stations and Local Primary 2 (LP 2) stations must continuously monitor a minimum of two EAS sources.

Objective 3: Broadcasters, and State and Local Emergency Managers and the National Weather Service should participate in and support the use of the Emergency Alert System during real events.

Objective 4: Broadcasters, and State and Local Emergency Managers and the National Weather Service should critique the use of the Emergency Alert System after real events.

Objective 5: State Emergency Communications Committee and Operation Area Committees shall modify State and Operational Area EAS Plans based on the results of real-time EAS activations.

C. EAS Priorities

The following are EAS priorities as set forth in the FCC Rules and Regulations:
A national activation of the EAS for a Presidential message with the Event code EAN as specified in §11.31 must take priority over any other message and preempt it if it is in progress.

1. EAS participants should transmit other EAS messages in the following order: (1) Local Area Messages; (2) State Messages; (3) National Information Center (NIC) Messages.

2. Key EAS sources (NP, LP, SP and SR) and Participating National (PN) that remain on the air during a National emergency must carry Presidential Messages "live" at the time of transmission or immediately upon receipt. Activation of the National level EAS must preempt State and Local Area EAS operation.

3. During a national emergency, the radio and television broadcast network program distribution facilities must be reserved exclusively for distribution of Presidential Messages. NIC messages received from national networks that are not broadcast at the time of original transmission must be recorded locally by LP sources for transmission at the earliest opportunity consistent with the message priorities in paragraph (1) of this section.

D. Assignment of Responsibilities

1. The State of Mississippi Emergency Communications Committee

The responsibility of administering this plan rests with the members of the Mississippi SECC. The SECC Chairman and Vice-Chairman are appointed by the FCC. SECC members include the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Local Area Emergency Communications Committees and other appointed by the SECC Chair. LAECC. Committee members are

appointed on a voluntary basis by the LAECC Chair. The LAECC's are also subcommittees of the SECC. The SECC is responsible for:

a. Overseeing the functionality of Mississippi's Emergency Alert System.
b. Reviewing operational area plans.
c. Promoting the EAS with Mississippi Broadcasters.

2. Local Area Emergency Communications Committees

The State of Mississippi is divided into nine major EAS Operational Areas.

- Northwest Area
- Northeast Area
- Golden Triangle
- East Central
- West Central
- Central
- Southwest
- Southeast
- Gulf Coast

Each area has a designated Local Area Emergency Communications Chairman.

3. Mississippi Emergency Management Agency

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency is a source of EAS State messages. MEMA is responsible for monitoring the National Weather Service Warning and Forecast Offices and county emergency management programs for emergency messages. MEMA may assist with either a single or multiple county EAS message activation. Additionally messages may originate from the Governor or a designated representative in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Messages are sent via the State Relay Network. MEMA's responsibilities are:

a. Assist the State Communications Committee with EAS program activities.
b. Participate in the required monthly testing of the EAS.
c. Maintain operational capability to provide immediate response to emergency/disaster events.
d. Immediately activate the EAS upon becoming aware of an emergency/disaster event.
e. Orient the public to the EAS program.

4. Mississippi Department of Public Safety

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety is the sole state agency in Mississippi authorized to develop, manage and issue 'Child Abduction Emergency' EAS events. MDPS originates the CAE events via the EAS System direct to the broadcast stations applicable for each specific 'Amber Alert.'

The MDPS responsibilities are:

a. Advise the State Communications Committee on 'Amber Alert' program activities.
b. Conduct the yearly test of the 'CAE' EAS event code on the month, date and time as specified by the yearly EAS test schedule.
c. Maintain operational capability of the EAS 'Amber Alert' equipment.

e. Transmit a 'stand-down' notification via the EAS network's secure messaging system when a CAE event is terminated.
f. Adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding governing the Mississippi Amber Alert Program.
g. Orient the public and other agencies to the Mississippi Amber Alert program.

5. National Weather Service

The National Weather Service is responsible for continuously monitoring and analyzing weather systems and issuing severe weather warnings and watches. The National Weather Service coordinates with state and local emergency management offices to ensure a smooth flow of information during operational events. Under the EAS, NOAA weather radio stations are encoding all of their alerts using the same coding as used for EAS alerts. Broadcasters and cable operators can feed their EAS decoders with the audio from any normal NOAA Weather Radio receiver and their EAS decoder will react just as it does with broadcaster EAS codes.

6. National Primary

National Primary (NP) is the sole source of all National EAS Alerts. These stations will be monitored by Mississippi SR and LP stations.

7. State Primary and State Relay

The State Primary in Mississippi is WMSI-FM 102.9 an FM station in Jackson. State Relay (SR) stations are WFCA-FM 107.9 in the Northeast Area and WQST-FM 92.5 in the East-Central Area. They are primarily sources of State EAS messages. They will also be relaying national, local and weather alerts.

8. Local Primary Station 1

Local Primary 1(LP1) radio station (AM or FM) is the source of EAS Operational Area messages. An LP1 source is responsible for coordinating the broadcast of emergency messages from sources such as the NWS or local emergency management offices or SP as specified in its EAS Operational Area Plan. If the LP1 is unable to carry out this function, other sources in the Operational Area may be assigned the responsibility as indicated in State and Local Area Plans. The Local Primary Station 1 responsibilities are to:

a. Continuously monitor a minimum of two sources (SP and local emergency management) of emergency information.
b. Conduct the Required Weekly and Monthly tests as outlined in CFR 47 Part 11.
c. Orient the public to the EAS program.

9. Local Primary Station 2

Local Primary 2 (LP) is the Operational Area's second source of the EAS message with the responsibility for monitoring the LP1 station and immediately re-broadcasting the emergency messages. Just as the LP1, LP2 stations monitor the National Weather Service,

local emergency management programs and, when available, the State Primary station. The Local Primary Station 2 responsibilities are to:

a. Continuously monitor the LP 1 and, at least, one additional source of emergency information.
b. Conduct the Required Weekly and Month tests as outlined in CFR 47 Part 11.
c. Orient the public to the EAS program.

10. Participating National

Most normal broadcasters and cable operators are designated as Participating National (PN). These sources are for delivering all levels of EAS to the general public.

11. Non-Participating National

Broadcasters who hold an "NN Authorization" from the FCC must sign-off the air during a national emergency.

12. State Relay Network

The State Relay Network is composed of State Relay sources, leased common carriers communications facilities or any other available communications facilities. The Network distributes the State EAS message originated by the Governor or designated official, and serve as the Presidential Entry Point.

13. Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

The FCC is the Federal Agency responsible for the oversight and coordination of all radio, television, and cable television broadcast within the Untied States. This includes the assessment and maintenance of rules and regulations governing the Emergency Alert System. The FCC provides support (technical assistance) to the State Emergency Communications Committee and operational area committees.

E. Emergency Alert System Process

The EAS is activated to warn a potentially impacted populace of an impending or occurring emergency/disaster event regardless of type (weather or other natural hazard, technological hazard, or terrorism). One or more of three agencies may activate EAS, as seen in Figure 1. Conceptually, the following flow chart and steps depict the EAS process.

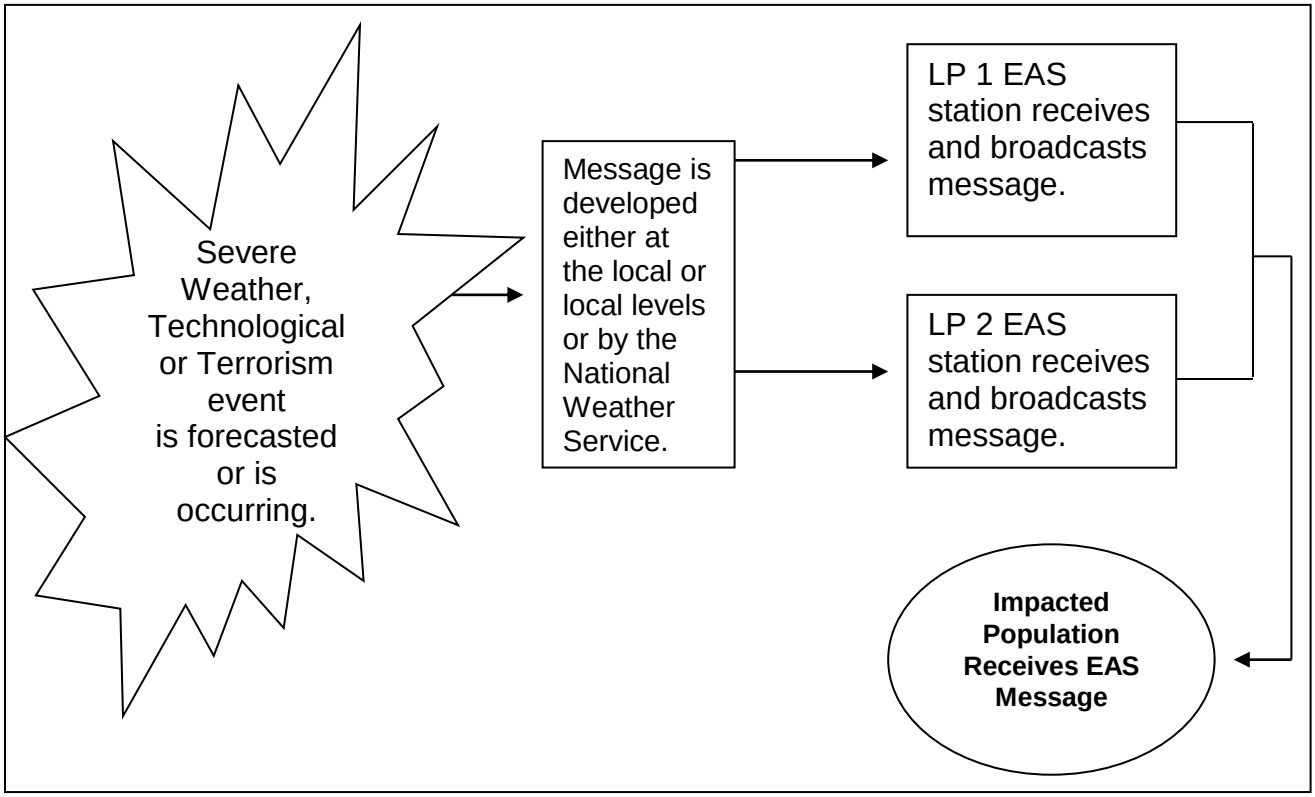

Figure 1: Emergency Alert System Process

1. An emergency or disaster event occurs or is impending which requires the immediate alerting of people in the potentially impacted area.

2. An EAS activation is initiated by the National Weather Service, MEMA, or the MDPS. MEMA may be required in some cases to assist a particular county in their activation of the EAS process.

   In the event of emergencies or disasters (hazardous materials, terrorist event, tornadoes, etc.) local emergency managers have the authority and must immediately advise the population of the dangerous situation by communicating directly with the Local Primary 1 (LP1) station(s).

   When a significant weather system covers a large portion of the state, more than one NWS Forecast Office may be required to activate EAS. This situation necessitates close coordination among all affected NWS Offices from the perspective of forecast continuity and EAS activation. Once determined that severe weather will impact the State, the NWS issues appropriate watches or warnings. However, it is important to note that the NWS is limited to the broadcast of only Civil Emergency EAS messages via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio System.

In the instance that an emergency or disaster event impacts Mississippi on a regional or statewide basis, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency has the authority to activate EAS to warn citizens.

3. The EAS message is transmitted to the Local Primary 1 Station by state emergency management, NWS or MDPS for immediate broadcast.

4. The EAS message is received by the LP 1 and is recorded or developed (by completing pre-scripted formats) prior to broadcast.

5. Recorded messages are re-broadcast within seconds. The manually received EAS message must be recorded then re-broadcast or announced directly to the broadcast audience. Staffed stations have the option of first receiving the message, and activating EAS at the next break (depending of the severity of the event).

6. Relay Stations receive and re-broadcast the EAS message;

7. The general public receives the EAS message.

8. The public reacts by tuning-in for additional information, as promised.

9. Follow-up emergency public information is broadcast.

10. The public takes protective action during the emergency/disaster event.

F. Summary

In summary, the success of the State EAS is contingent upon:

- The ability of all EAS partners to understand and carry-out their responsibilities;
- The SECC to aggressively coordinate EAS activities;
- The public to understand and heed emergency alerting and instructions.