



Canadian Association of Broadcasters  
Association canadienne des radiodiffuseurs

May 30, 2008

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National Public Alerting System Project  
Public Safety Canada  
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Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P8

**Re: Letter of Interest (LOI) of April 3, 2008**

Dear Mr. Anglehart:

Further to the Letter of Interest (LOI) launched by Public Safety Canada regarding the development of a National Public Alerting System (NPAS) for Canada, please find attached the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Position Paper, ***Public Alerting in Canada: Achieving Effective Emergency Message Distribution via Radio and Television Broadcasting Stations***, in response to this request. This document fully captures the consensus from the work of the CAB Emergency Alerting Task Force (EATF) and our member companies.

The paper will serve as a framework for ongoing dialogue with Public Safety Canada, the CRTC, Environment Canada, Industry Canada, provincial governments, and any other relevant stakeholders. It identifies key issues relating to the functioning of a NPAS. Over the next three years, the CRTC will require broadcasters to develop an integrated approach for the broadcast of emergency alerts in collaboration with various government departments. Therefore early resolution of these issues is essential to meet the deadline.

The CAB appreciates Public Safety Canada's keen interest in hearing from Canada's private broadcasters on this important issue. We look forward to meeting you on June 5, 2008 to further discuss the CAB's Position Paper and progress in developing a NPAS for Canada.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by:*

Glenn O'Farrell,  
President & CEO

Cc: Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission – Robert Morin  
Industry Canada – Martin Dumas  
Environment Canada – Norm Paulsen  
Department of Canadian Heritage – Jean-Pierre Blais



# **Public Alerting in Canada: Achieving Effective Emergency Message Distribution via Radio and Television Broadcasting Stations**

**Submission to Public Safety Canada  
by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters**

**May 30, 2008**

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**CAB Vision: The goal of the CAB is to represent and advance the interests of Canada's private broadcasters in the social, cultural and economic fabric of the country.**

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## Submission Summary

The CAB has prepared this submission in order to provide broadcasters' recommendations for developing an effective, efficient and timely means of achieving public distribution, via radio and TV stations, of threat-to-life emergency alerting messages issued by a National Public Alerting System (NPAS). It is aimed at all parties interested in the establishment of such a system in Canada, including departments and agencies at all levels of government, broadcast regulators and other participants in the Canadian Broadcasting System such as satellite and cable distribution systems. This report may also provide useful information to anyone preparing proposals flowing from the federal government's recent Letter of Interest (LOI) respecting the proposed NPAS.

In this report, the CAB sets out basic issues that need to be clarified and resolved in order to allow the proposed NPAS to roll out as quickly as possible, using the broadcasting system as a key distributor of messages to the general public. The principal objective is to develop an understanding among the parties that will simultaneously address the emergency alerting needs of the authorities while also respecting the legitimate business, regulatory and legal concerns of broadcasters.

The CAB's specific recommendations and positions on various issues can be summarized as follows:

- (1) *Broadcasters agree with the CRTC that a voluntary partnership between our industry and governments is the best way to establish a reliable and effective NPAS.*
- (2) *The NPAS should provide a single, centralized emergency message aggregation function.*
- (3) *A single, comprehensive message format, based on the CAPCP Standard, should be used by the NPAS when transmitting alerts to distributors.*
- (4) *The NPAS should provide a centralized message dispatching function, utilizing a country-wide back-bone transmission system that "pushes" emergency alerts to local broadcasters, based upon the use of a common transmission technology, a single messaging protocol and non-proprietary hardware and software.*
- (5) *NPAS emergency alerting messages intended for immediate broadcast should be confined to a pre-determined list of permissible categories, with a clear agreement among all participating parties as to the types of messages that are considered appropriate for delivery via broadcast systems.*
- (6) *Situations that may trigger alerts warranting immediate airing should not be graded for "Urgency/Severity/Certainty" using a separate scale for each of these factors; rather, they should be subject to a composite rating that combines all three factors.*
- (7) *The public will best be served by the NPAS if broadcasters are free to either transmit high-priority emergency messages verbatim or incorporate them into the flow of regular programming, at their own option.*

- (8) *Broadcasters should be free to determine the most appropriate methods of ensuring that eligible emergency messages are transmitted to the public as quickly as possible.*
- (9) *Alerts destined for broadcast distribution must be formatted in a manner suited to the medium and protocols should be established with respect to message repetition frequencies and “all-clear” messages.*
- (10) *It would be inappropriate for distributors to be responsible for translating auxiliary material that may be transmitted along with CAPCP alerts.*
- (11) *As the provision of emergency alerting messages to the public is a fundamental responsibility of governments, the entire cost of creating and operating the NPAS should be covered by public funds.*
- (12) *Broadcasters consider that it will not be practical for our industry as a whole to implement emergency messaging distribution at the local level prior to the establishment and roll-out of a permanent NPAS.*
- (13) *The NPAS should provide participating broadcasters with assurances that, so long as they carry out their commitment to timely delivery of authorized emergency alerting messages, they will be saved harmless from civil actions, regulatory consequences or criminal prosecution.*
- (14) *The NPAS should be structured so that messages relating to a single emergency, and originated by different government levels or jurisdictions, cannot be delivered to the same broadcast insertion point simultaneously.*
- (15) *Broadcasters intend to negotiate protocols with BDUs to ensure that alerting messages inserted by a local broadcast licensee are not removed (or masked) by the operator of any down-stream distribution undertakings.*

Full details on the broadcasters’ rationale for each of these recommendations are contained in the main report.

## 1. Introduction

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) is the national voice of Canada's private broadcasters, representing the vast majority of Canadian programming services, including private radio and television stations, networks, specialty, pay and pay-per-view services. The goal of the CAB is to represent and advance the interests of Canada's private broadcasters in the social, cultural and economic fabric of the country.

The CAB has prepared this submission in order to provide broadcasters' recommendations for developing an effective, efficient and timely means of achieving public distribution, via radio and TV stations, of threat-to-life emergency alerting messages issued by a National Public Alerting System (NPAS). It is hoped that this submission will provide general information of value to all parties interested in the establishment of such a system in Canada, including departments and agencies at all levels of government, broadcast regulators and other participants in the Canadian Broadcasting System such as satellite and cable distribution systems. It may also assist those who wish to prepare system proposals flowing from the federal government's recent issuance of a Letter of Interest (LOI) respecting NPAS<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Background

Since its inception, broadcasting has been utilized as a primary means of ensuring that Canadians receive timely information about emergency situations unfolding in their communities (or indeed anywhere). By their nature, broadcasting services are both ubiquitous and heavily used by the public. There are few corners of Canada where over-the-air (OTA) broadcasting signals do not reach. Moreover, the consumption of radio and television programming services continues to be an activity that occupies Canadians for very significant portions of their daily lives. Even when working, driving or doing household tasks, people continue to consume broadcasting services as a time-shared activity, making it easy to reach large segments of the population, at least during their waking hours.

Broadcasters have always considered the provision of emergency messages as a vital contribution to the public service obligations they assume as part of the licensing process. Their commitment in this regard has been amply demonstrated over many decades and in communities from coast to coast. Along with others in the broadcasting industry, the CAB staff, advisors and members have been active participants for over ten years with federal departments and agencies and through CAB internal committees, discussing the NPAS<sup>2</sup> concept and how it might develop. We are therefore gratified to see that progress is finally being made on this important national project, with the recent release of the federal government's LOI.

Up to now, the public distribution of alerting messages has been organized primarily through voluntary arrangements between individual station licensees and authorities at the local or provincial level, rather than as a national effort<sup>3</sup>. Broadcasters believe that the many human-created and natural tragic events that have occurred over the past several years demonstrate convincingly that it is necessary to develop a

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<sup>1</sup> Ref: "*Letter Of Interest - National Public Alerting System*"; 3 April 2008; Public Works and Government Services Canada; File Reference: 107XL0D160-085926;

<sup>2</sup> Formerly known as "*CANALERT*".

<sup>3</sup> e.g. Alberta's Emergency Public Warning System (EPWS) and Ontario's "Red Alert" system.

standardized approach to emergency alerting and to ensure that this system operates on a pan-Canadian basis, while still maintaining the voluntary nature of these operations.

Establishing a Canada-wide approach to the broadcasters' role in emergency alerting is also favoured by the regulator, the CRTC, which has indicated its desire that cable/MDS systems, DTH satellite undertakings, and OTA broadcasters should deliver such messages through entities licensed under the *Broadcasting Act*<sup>4</sup>.

### **3. Achieving Effective Broadcaster/NPAS Arrangements**

In this section, the CAB outlines a number of issues that need to be resolved among the many parties that want to see a national alerting system rolled out as quickly as possible. The principal objective is to develop an understanding among the parties that will simultaneously address the emergency alerting needs of the authorities while also respecting the legitimate business, regulatory and legal concerns of the industry. It is also important that any such arrangements be structured so that the contributions the broadcasters will make in delivering alerts to the public will mesh well with those implemented by various other means of electronic communication including common carriers, wireless companies, and broadcasting distribution undertakings (BDUs).

#### **3.1 Voluntary Partnership**

*Broadcasters agree with the CRTC that a voluntary partnership between our industry and governments is the best way to establish a reliable and effective NPAS.*

Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20 states, "... the Commission considers that a voluntary approach is currently the best option for the establishment of a Canadian emergency alert system"<sup>5</sup>. The CAB agrees that a successful voluntary partnership between alerting message originators (mainly governments) and the primary message distributors (the broadcasters) is the best way to ensure that a reliable and effective national public alerting system can be created in Canada. Broadcasters have serious doubts that the necessary degree of co-operation would be achieved if the carriage of emergency alerting messages by broadcasters, cable/MDS undertakings and DTH satellite providers were made mandatory and tightly regulated.

The Alberta Emergency Public Warning System (EPWS) model demonstrates that voluntary compliance is the natural tendency of community-oriented broadcast licensees. On the other hand, the US mandatory model shows that the "regulatory stick" approach has resulted in a last-mile public alerting system that is often poorly maintained and unreliable.

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<sup>4</sup> Ref: Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20; "*Emergency Alert Services*"; 28 February 2007

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* at para 79

### 3.2 Centralized Message Aggregation Function

*Broadcasters support the concept of a single, centralized emergency message aggregation function within the NPAS.*

The CAB believes that broadcasters cannot reasonably be expected to deal individually with all of the entities currently authorized to originate emergency messages in Canada, or indeed even with a smaller number of provincial or regional aggregation centres. Having a single national aggregator will ensure that a common approach to message delivery is taken in all regions of the country and will make it easier for new broadcasters to join the NPAS.

A central aggregator would be the most efficient means of vetting emergency messages to ensure that they originate from duly authorized sources, that the messages conform to agreed-upon national protocols and that message-delivery acknowledgements returned by distributors will be routed to the proper locations.

The message aggregation process will likely require close liaison, as well as formally-adopted protocols, between the aggregator and the wide variety of government departments and agencies that originate emergency alerts. Similarly, the CAB envisages the creation of participation protocols that would be signed by the aggregator and the broadcasters, perhaps through a national master agreement negotiated between the federal government and this association.

### 3.3 Standard Format for Alerting Messages

*The CAB agrees strongly that a single message format, based on the CAPCP Standard, should be used by the NPAS when transmitting alerts to distributors.*

Broadcasters have participated in the lengthy government/industry committee discussions leading up to the development of the Common Alerting Protocol Canadian Profile v1.1 (CAPCP). This standard is seen as the best choice for Canada given that it is compatible with similar standards being adopted internationally, especially in the USA. While this standard is more all-encompassing than required for a broadcast-only alerting system, the CAB is satisfied that it includes the basic elements that will enable it to be used efficiently by broadcasting participants within the NPAS.

Broadcaster support for the CAPCP as a standard should not be interpreted as unqualified agreement that all sections of the current v1.1 document should apply with respect to the broadcast distribution of alerts. Specifically, broadcasters believe that a much-reduced version of the Event Code Table should be negotiated<sup>6</sup>. This reduced list should detail only those events that will have the potential to escalate to a level that warrants the immediate interruption of regular broadcast programming for transmission of an alert.

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<sup>6</sup> Ref: Appendix D, Section 6; PWGSC "Letter Of Interest - National Public Alerting System"; 3 April 2008



### 3.4 Centralized Message Dispatch Function

*The CAB considers it essential that the NPAS provide a centralized message dispatching function, utilizing a country-wide back-bone transmission system that “pushes” emergency alerts to local broadcasters, based upon the use of a common transmission technology and a single messaging protocol.*

The CAB believes that the establishment of a single, centralized message dispatch centre for the NPAS would best ensure accurate and timely delivery of messages to distributors. In particular, it would avoid the possibility that a variety of incompatible technical transmission systems might be required between the message sources and broadcasters located in different provinces or regions. Moreover, it would foster the use of a standardized protocol for the transmission of all messages (e.g. the Canadian Common Alerting Protocol, or CAPCP). This dispatch centre would carry all messages released by the centralized message aggregator described above. In fact, the most efficient implementation may be to have a common entity undertake both the aggregation and dispatching functions at the same location.

Broadcasters believe that the transmission of alerting messages to distributors should be achieved using a technology that allows a direct connection between the Dispatch Centre and each distributor. A system that depends upon relay or “daisy-chain” transmissions, as currently employed in the USA, would be too slow and too prone to errors, in our view. Any such system, if used at all, should be confined to back-up purposes, in the event of failure of the principal transmission system.

To maximize the opportunity to deliver localized alerts in all areas of Canada, messages will have to be “pushed” to broadcasters by the NPAS transmission system, as opposed to implementing a “pull” methodology, where distributors would continuously monitor a central dispatch site and fetch pertinent messages as soon as they are posted. Message transmission via “push” technology would ensure that timely reception is possible at all broadcast locations, rather than just those sites that have the technical capability to use “pull” technology.

In this regard, the CAB notes that local broadcasters in small communities may not yet have access to high-speed internet services that would allow 24/7 monitoring of an NPAS website at reasonable cost. Moreover, many unattended re-broadcasting transmitter sites have no access to the internet at all. Some do not even have landline telephone services and transmit programming fed from a distant location, via satellite or other means. In such cases, the only way to insert a localized emergency alert message would be to do so right at the broadcast transmitter site.

If an internet-based “pull” technology were to be used as the primary method of transmitting NPAS emergency messages to distributors, many broadcasters may only be able to access messages at a limited number of points within their systems. Alerts may have to be broadcast simultaneously over multiple transmitters, resulting in their delivery to many more people than may actually be required.

The CAB also believes that the use of an internet-based “pull” transmission system raises concerns about security. Servers operated by both broadcasters and ISPs may be vulnerable to denial-of-service attacks by hackers or saboteurs, which is not a risk that should be considered acceptable for a vital national emergency messaging system.

While internet transmission of NPAS messages may be suitable as an interim measure to get a national system up and running and the whole concept field-tested, it would be preferable to base the permanent transmission strategy on a “push” concept, which is more versatile, faster and more secure. Any “push”

transmission technology that may be implemented will need to have several basic characteristics if broadcasters are expected to access messages quickly, to act on them regardless of whether the station is attended or not, and to be as precise as possible in delivering messages to specific communities. Specifically, any such system should:

- utilize a back-bone delivery technology that allows the simultaneous transmission of alerts to all parts of Canada (e.g. satellite);
- be capable of reliably transmitting messages in an encrypted format;
- be capable of transmitting relevant auxiliary audio data (e.g. WAV/MP3 files) as well as the basic CAPCP alerting messages;
- require local receiving equipment that is both physically small and reasonable in cost;
- accommodate a low-data return link that can be used to send message acknowledgements and action confirmations;
- be associated with at least one back-up transmission system;
- utilize non-proprietary hardware and software.

Broadcasters consider the dispatch function and the message transmission function (to local distributors) as being inseparable. In other words, the Dispatch Centre should be the entity that will negotiate with suitable carriers for the leasing and operation of transmission facilities and ensure reliable, timely delivery of CAPCP alerting messages and associated data files to each required distribution point (i.e. broadcast location).

### 3.5 Message Eligibility

*The CAB agrees strongly that NPAS emergency alerting messages intended for immediate broadcast should be confined to a pre-determined list of permissible categories, with a clear agreement among all participating parties as to the types of messages that are considered appropriate for delivery via broadcast systems.*

In discussions with federal government departments and agencies on the NPAS concept, the CAB has been informed that only threat-to-life emergency messages will require immediate airing. While the Dispatch Centre may also transmit messages of lower priority to distributors, it is understood that these are to be considered as information-only materials, which may either be used as part of general news coverage or distributed directly to the public, at the discretion of the distributor.

The CAB notes that the above position is consistent with Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20, which indicates that only the most urgent messages (i.e. “a warning to the public announcing an imminent or unfolding danger to life.”) should fall within the air-immediately category<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Ref: Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20; at para 86

### 3.6 Trigger Levels for Broadcast Alerts

*Broadcasters believe that situations that may trigger alerts warranting immediate airing should not be graded for Urgency/Severity/Certainty using a separate scale for each of these factors; rather, they should be subject to a composite rating that combines all three factors.*

According to the federal government's LOI, "... the minimum Urgency/Severity/Certainty (USC) levels needed to trigger an NPAS alert are being developed and will be maintained by federal, provincial and territorial government subject matter experts<sup>8</sup>." A three-tier grading system may well be appropriate for NPAS alerts that are not "threat-to-life". However, the CAB does not consider that it would be appropriate for broadcasters to immediately air alerts that do not have a high ranking in all three of these categories simultaneously. It is possible to foresee situations where there is a high level of severity and certainty but where the urgency is low, perhaps because the event is forecast well in advance. An example of this would be a storm that is quite certain to occur and which will be severe enough to threaten lives; however, it will not happen for 12 hours.

### 3.7 Carriage of Verbatim Messages

*The CAB believes that the public will best be served if broadcasters are free to either transmit high-priority emergency messages verbatim or incorporate them into the flow of regular programming, at their own option.*

Many broadcasters will air emergency messages exactly as received from the NPAS, especially where automatic insertion into programming is the chosen means for carriage. In such cases, the information contained in CAPCP messages, as well as pertinent auxiliary text or audio files, will be converted into audio/visual material that can be aired. This will then be cut into regular programming, according to established protocols.

However, some broadcasters have studio facilities that are fully staffed on a 24/7 basis, especially where news operations are a major part of the licensee's public service commitment. Past experience has shown that these stations are often already covering an emergency event, as part of their regular news function, at the time when an official alert is issued. In such cases, automatic insertion of an NPAS alert may not be appropriate. In fact, were this to happen, the insertion could obliterate more up-to-date, vital information that the station is in the process of transmitting to the public.

Considering the above, the CAB believes that broadcasters should have the option of taking received NPAS messages and blending them into news coverage already in progress. This could include having on-air personnel read the alerting message, either in its original or edited form. Timely airing of the message would be paramount and would be covered in whatever protocols are developed on the matter of message latency (see following section). The CAB suggests that broadcasters choosing this option would also implement a "fail-safe" mode, whereby the actual alert message provided by the NPAS would be aired automatically in the event that no action is taken to blend the alert into regular news programming within a specified time window.

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<sup>8</sup> Ref: Ref: Appendix D, Section 3.5; PWGSC "Letter Of Interest - National Public Alerting System"; 3 April 2008

### 3.8 Message Insertion and Latency

*The CAB considers that broadcasters should be free to determine the most appropriate methods of ensuring that eligible emergency messages are transmitted to the public as quickly as possible.*

The actual means by which broadcasters will put alerting messages to air should be left to individual licensees to decide. It should not be assumed that automatic, hands-off insertion of messages into outgoing broadcast material will always ensure they reach the public in the most effective and efficient way.

Broadcasters believe that they need to have the freedom to decide how to meet commitments to air alerting messages within certain pre-determined maximum time delays (following receipt from the NPAS). Some may decide that automatic insertion is absolutely necessary, especially during periods when facilities are unattended. Others may conclude that it is actually faster to air messages via manual insertion, due to the nature of their operations. Still other broadcasters may need to use both methods, depending upon the time and day of the week.

The CAB believes that message latency commitments should be part of the protocols and agreements that the broadcasting industry needs to develop, in concert with NPAS and the message originators. In other words, once agreements have been reached with respect to how long it should take to air urgent alerts, it should be entirely up to each broadcaster to determine the best technical and operational means of achieving this requirement within its own plant.

Moreover, it should be up to each broadcaster to decide whether the message acceptance point (from the NPAS) should be at its studios, at its transmitter(s) or at some other location. Due to the many variations in the way broadcast signals are generated, transported to transmitter sites and actually broadcast to the public, it is incorrect to assume that the most suitable entry point will always be the broadcasting transmitter closest to the area that is affected by the emergency. Broadcasters themselves are best equipped to determine how to deliver messages to affected areas in the quickest and most cost-effective manner.

### 3.9 Message Formatting and Airing Protocols

*Broadcasters believe that alerts destined for broadcast distribution must be formatted in a manner suited to the medium and that protocols should be established with respect to message repetition frequencies and “all-clear” messages.*

Experience suggests that alerting messages provided by emergency management authorities are not always well suited for direct on-air use. Some messages are too lengthy. Others may be written in a style suited for text messaging, as opposed to voice transmission or visual crawls on TV screens. Broadcasters also believe that NPAS/broadcaster protocols will have to be established with respect to how often messages must be repeated, the interval between repeats and the need for “all-clear” announcements once emergency situations end.

### **3.10 Translation of Emergency Alerting Messages**

*Broadcasters do not consider that it would be appropriate for distributors to be responsible for translating auxiliary material that may be transmitted along with CAPCP alerts.*

CAPCP messages providing only event codes and alert phrases can be decoded at reception points and turned into pre-determined, human-readable or audible messages in any language. However, auxiliary material transmitted from the Dispatch Centre that includes files containing supplementary audio or text messages relating to the emergency situation should be in English, French and any other languages appropriate to the locale where public delivery is required. When “push” technology is used, auxiliary messages in different languages should be transmitted simultaneously over parallel communication channels on the same system, so that first version received by a broadcaster can be in the predominant on-air language used by that station.

### **3.11 Funding Mechanisms and Cost-Sharing**

*Broadcasters believe that the provision of emergency alerting messages to the public is a fundamental responsibility of governments; therefore, the entire cost of creating and operating the NPAS should be covered by public funds.*

Broadcasters believe that emergency alerting messages should be made available, free of charge and in a suitable technical format, at locations specified by each distributor participating in the NPAS. Broadcasters are prepared to work with any private undertaking selected to act as an agent of governments in building and/or operating the NPAS Dispatch Centre. However, the CAB believes that any costs associated with this should be the sole responsibility of governments. Message distributors, including broadcasters, should not be obliged to pay pass-through charges or any other levies relating to central NPAS operations.

The CAB notes that this model has worked well in Alberta, where the transmission and equipment costs required to make the EPWS functional are fully financed by the provincial government. For their part, participating broadcasters must maintain the on-site receiving equipment in good working order and participate in occasional system tests. They also must cover internal costs associated with integrating the EPWS messages into their internal program handling, automation and logging systems.

## **4. Other Issues**

As protocols and operational agreements are developed between the NPAS and broadcast distributors, a number of related issues will have to be discussed and resolved. Among these are the following:

## 4.1 Implementation by Broadcasters

*Broadcasters consider that it will not be practical for our industry as a whole to implement emergency messaging distribution at the local level prior to the establishment and roll-out of a permanent NPAS.*

The CRTC has indicated that it expects the broadcasting industry to have put in place, by early 2009, a voluntary system for distributing emergency alerts to Canadians<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, all interested parties have been advised that in January 2008, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial ministers responsible for emergency management met in Halifax and “...instructed officials to establish a Canadian public alerting system in 2010”<sup>10</sup>.

From the above, it would appear that NPAS system is not likely to be ready until at least 2010 to provide the emergency messages that the CRTC wants the broadcasting industry to distribute. Broadcasters would have a difficult time determining how to configure their own program distribution and transmission plants to handle NPAS messages until they are provided with full technical and operational details on method(s) that will be used to send the messages.

Some CAB members have expressed interest in setting up early field trials, perhaps based upon the delivery of certain types of alerting messages (e.g. weather warnings), using the CAPCP protocol. Broadcasters would be pleased if any such trials could commence in the latter part of 2008 or early 2009 and the CAB stands ready to assist in organizing them. On the other hand, we do not favour moving ahead with industry-wide plans until the full details of the NPAS are made available by governments.

## 4.2 Liability

*The CAB believes that the NPAS should provide participating broadcasters with assurances that, so long as they carry out their commitment to timely delivery of authorized emergency alerting messages, they will be saved harmless from civil actions, regulatory consequences or criminal prosecution.*

## 4.3 Duplicate Messaging

*Broadcasters consider that the NPAS will have to be structured so that messages relating to a single emergency, and originated by different government levels or jurisdictions, cannot be delivered to the same broadcast insertion point simultaneously.*

Because a broadcasting undertaking can cover a very large area with a single transmitter, there is a high probability that several jurisdictions located within that area would originate messages relating to the same emergency at or about the same time. The CAB believes that it will be necessary for the NPAS message aggregator to ensure that multiple messaging is avoided. While this issue can perhaps be managed through protocols between the NPAS and the message originators, it also provides a further reason to allow broadcasters to make local decisions as to how to blend such messages into current programming (see Section 3.7).

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<sup>9</sup> Ref: Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20; at paras 107 & 108

<sup>10</sup> Ref: Appendix B, Section 2; PWGSC “Letter Of Interest - National Public Alerting System”; 3 April 2008

#### 4.4 Message Removal or Masking

*Broadcasters intend to negotiate protocols with BDUs to ensure that alerting messages inserted by a local broadcast licensee are not removed (or masked) by the operator of any down-stream distribution undertakings.*

In Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20, the CRTC states that it intends to amend Section 7(d) of the Broadcasting Distribution Regulations to allow BDUs to alter the content of any programming service they carry, in order to insert duly authorized emergency alerting messages<sup>11</sup>. This raises the possibility that emergency alerts being transmitted by local radio and television stations may be obliterated or impaired at subscribers' receivers, as a result of actions taken by BDUs serving the same geographic areas. Since it is expected that most BDUs will undertake automatic and verbatim insertion of NPAS messages, there is a real danger that vital local coverage of an emergency situation by a broadcaster could be interrupted unexpectedly on receivers connected to BDUs.

The CAB believes that the best way to avoid this situation would be if the BDUs were to refrain from inserting emergency alerts on local stations that can reasonably be expected to be carrying the same alert. Broadcasters see this being achieved through specific protocols between the parties.

#### 5. Concluding Comments

In this report, the CAB sets out a number of observations, comments and recommendations that broadcasters believe will smooth the way to the early implementation of a country-wide public alerting system that will serve the needs of all Canadians. Our comments were developed after much discussion, not only among the association's members but also with other broadcasters, including the CBC. These views are largely based upon inputs received during oral discussions with government departments and agencies responsible for seeing this national project to fruition, as well as from written documents provided by these organizations.

Clearly this is a complicated undertaking. More than a few crucial details remain fluid, even after many years of discussion. No doubt a great deal of further discussion among all the players will be required before the final roll-out of the NPAS in 2010. Broadcasters have been participating in this project since its inception. We are eager to continue working toward achieving the common goals identified by federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as the CRTC and many other industry players. We continue to believe that the best way to reach the common goal is through active and timely consultations, fostered within an atmosphere of partnership, rather than through regulations.

The CAB welcomes questions and comments concerning any of the positions stated in this report.

\*\*\* End of Document \*\*\*

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<sup>11</sup> Ref: Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2007-20; at para 85