



For Immediate Release

WRAL-TV Becomes First Commercial TV Station in U.S. To Demonstrate Mobile Emergency Alert System

*New Technology Shows How Mobile DTV Broadcasting Will Deliver Video,
Audio, Photos, Maps, and Other Emergency Information to Millions at Once*

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20, 2012 – The future is here, and WRAL-TV, Raleigh, N.C., is again leading the way. Last week, surrounded by state emergency management personnel, representatives from NCDOT, NC Highway Patrol, local police, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and a North Carolina Senator, WRAL-TV demonstrated the future of crisis communications, becoming the first commercial television station in the nation to show the life-saving opportunity of mobile digital TV technology.

The Mobile Emergency Alert System, or M-EAS, provides free, interactive, on-demand emergency information over live television on capable mobile DTV handsets. This innovative new technology uses the data stream of the over-the-air broadcast television signal, requiring no cell towers, no cell phone data plan and no Internet access. No other system has the capacity to deliver on-demand emergency messages to so many people simultaneously. M-EAS has the potential to reach millions of people with a single digital TV broadcast. The system 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. WRAL-TV is committed to launching this life-saving service once it is standardized.

“Beyond the challenges of scalability and reliability, the current commercial mobile alert system (CMAS) only allows for 90 characters of text. That isn’t even a Tweet’s worth of information,” said James F. Goodmon, President and CEO of Capitol Broadcasting Company, parent company of WRAL. “We can and should do better for the safety of our people. The United States needs M-EAS and the ATSC is in the process of standardizing it. Once that is complete, we believe it should be in every phone and tablet. We invite FCC Chairman Genachowski and other FCC members to embrace this as an issue of national importance. We’d like this issue to be taken up by his Technological Advisory Council. With this technology, local television stations can use the mobile spectrum to save lives.”

WRAL’s M-EAS demonstration follows a year of field testing by 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. Those same technology partners provided substantial expertise and assistance to WRAL for today’s demonstration.

In the Sept. 13 demonstration, WRAL-TV showed a hurricane simulation using Hurricane Irene as the example. Hurricane Irene was a deadly storm that struck the North Carolina coast on August 27, 2011 and killed 21 people in eight states, six in North Carolina. A viewer watching live, mobile DTV gets a hurricane warning alert onscreen, then uses a touchscreen menu to choose what emergency information to display on a mobile device in text, images, even video clips.

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The demonstration showed Doppler radar images, forecast models, video updates, what to put in an emergency kit, road closures, flooding information, detailed evacuation routes plus county-by-county emergency numbers, shelters and damage reports.

"In disaster events we know quick, accurate information is key to saving and protecting lives," said Barry Porter, Regional Executive Director for the American Red Cross. "I applaud WRAL for their efforts to use this emerging technology to place life saving information literally in our hands. It is very clear to me that it should be developed and implemented as soon as possible."

Steven D. Hammel, WRAL-TV VP and General Manager said, "Public service is a local broadcaster's highest duty. The future of local television is mobile. It's important that our citizens and our government know this technology is viable for free using the mobile broadcast spectrum. All it needs is government adoption and the mass production of receivers to deliver it. This technology will save lives in a crisis."

Because M-EAS does not use cell towers, it bypasses congestion and high failure rates of cellular systems. During the Japanese Tsunami, over 13,000 cell towers were wiped out, cutting off millions of people from information. A similar mobile DTV system in Japan delivered valuable information following the disaster.

During the minor earthquake that Raleigh felt last year, cell phone systems were clogged for 30 minutes. This non-emergency demonstrated the fragility of the cell phone system as a means of communicating emergency information.

What makes M-EAS unique is that a TV signal can send more information to an infinite number of people. When the power is out, when cell phones are jammed, the broadcast signal prevails.

"Mobile-EAS signals are delivered by local broadcasters in the free over-the-air broadcast signal, so the system would be inherently available for local, regional and national emergencies. Mobile-EAS is highly reliable, redundant, and infinitely scalable. It's free and requires no retraining of the American people, who already turn to local television as their primary source for news, and we expect they'll continue to do so as new devices reach the market to receive Mobile DTV broadcasts," said Sam Matheny, Capitol Broadcasting Company's Vice President of Policy and Innovation.

Jay Adrick, Vice President of Broadcast Technology at Harris Corporation said, "Harris Broadcast is proud to be supporting WRAL in yet another digital broadcasting first with the launch of mobile emergency alerting."

"WRAL is a true pioneer in digital television, going back to those first HDTV broadcasts more than 15 years ago. M-EAS is another important milestone, and we applaud WRAL as the first commercial TV station to launch this life-saving service," said LG's Jong Kim, president of the Zenith R&D Lab.

With this live demonstration of M-EAS, WRAL-TV expands its legacy as an innovator in digital technology. In 1996, the station was the first in the nation to broadcast an HDTV signal. In 2000, it broadcast the first all-HD newscast in the world. When the station first showed live digital television on Raleigh city buses in 2009, it made mobile DTV history.

M-EAS is being standardized by the Advanced Television Systems Committee, building on the ATSC Mobile Digital TV Standard, which WRAL has been using for the past three years.

The event was hosted by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety Emergency Operations Center and was live-streamed on WRAL.com. It's archived here: www.wral.com/11477194. The page includes a twitter feed from the event and background on the project.

For questions about the technology or the demonstration, contact Sam Matheny, Capitol Broadcasting Company Vice President of Policy & Innovation at 919-821-8938.