The Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established the Emergency Alert System (EAS) in November 1994. Using new digital technology, the EAS replaced the old Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) as a tool to wary the public about emergencies.

The most common use of the EAS is by the National Weather Service to warn local communities about severe weather warnings. You have probably heard radio stations interrupt their programming to broadcast a tornado warning or seen a TV station or cable system run a "crawl" across the bottom of the TV screen about a severe thunderstorm. That's EAS.

EAS can be activated nationally by the President, statewide by a Governor, or locally by authorized city or county officials for other emergencies, ranging from earthquakes to forest fires or hazardous materials releases to nuclear war.

The Amber Plan

A recently enacted component of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) has been credited with aiding in the rescue of several missing children who were kidnaped by strangers. It's called the AMBER Plan. The name now stands for **A**merica's **M**issing: **B**roadcast **E**mergency **R**esponse.

It Works Like This: Once police officials have confirmed a missing child report, an alert is sent to radio stations, television stations, and cable companies. Broadcasters interrupt programming to relay the information using the EAS to voluntarily deliver the information to the community - the same concept is used during severe weather or national emergencies. A description of the abducted child, suspected abductor and details of the abduction are broadcast to millions of listeners and viewers. (The alert is read after a distinctive sound tone and the statement: "This is an AMBER Alert.") The alert also provides information about how members of the public who have information relating to the abduction may contact the police or other appropriate law enforcement agency.

The goal of the AMBER Plan is to galvanize an entire community, adding millions of extra eyes and ears to watch, listen, and help in the safe return of the child and apprehension of the suspect.

The EAS is used to notify the public about severe weather and other national emergencies. In order to prevent the over use of the EAS system, two criteria must usually be met to enact the AMBER Plan: 1) A child must be 15 years of age or younger, or have a proven mental or physical disability; and 2) Police must believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.

What You Can Do: If you see a child, adult, or vehicle fitting the AMBER Alert description, immediately call the telephone number given in the AMBER Alert and provide authorities with as much information as possible.

Remember: The AMBER Alerts are only used for the most serious child abduction cases, where the police believe the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death, not for runaways or most parental abductions.

For additional information of the AMBER Plan, visit the National Center for Missing and Exploit Children's (NCMEC) Web site, www.missingkids.com.

What Is NOAA Weather Radio?

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information direct from a nearby National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day.

Working with the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Emergency Alert System, NWR is an "all hazards" radio network, making it your single source for comprehensive weather and emergency information. NWR also broadcasts warning and post-event information for all types of hazards--both natural (such as earthquakes and volcano activity) and environmental (such as chemical releases or oil spills).

Known as the "Voice of the National Weather Service," NWR is provided as a public service by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), part of the Department of Commerce. NWR includes more than 800 transmitters, covering all 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the U.S. Pacific Territories. NWR requires a special radio receiver or scanner capable of picking up the signal.

Special-Needs NOAA Weather Radio

The special-needs NOAA Weather Radio has recently been designed to adapt to the needs of the deaf-and-hard-of-hearing community. The radio can warn deaf and hard-of-hearing persons of hazardous conditions, giving them around-the-clock, up-to-the-minute weather information. It is a weather alerting system that can be a lifesaver, much as the now commonly-used smoke detector with flashing light, for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons.

Special-Needs NOAA Radios can be obtained from the following:

- ⦿WeatherRadios.com
- ⦿HomeSafe, Inc.
- ⦿Silent Call Communications Corporation
- ⦿Harris Communications, Inc.
- ⦿Weather Alert 2000
- ⦿2 Way Talk

Note: Mention of these commercial products does not imply endorsement.