Weather-Ready Nation
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Important NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards and Emergency Alert System Changes

NWS Dissemination Services update as of September 28, 2016

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) added three new Event Codes to the Emergency Alert System (EAS) Rules for the 2017 hurricane season.

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is the primary means for NWS alerts to activate the EAS. The new rules adopt the following weather Event Codes for both EAS and NWR:

Extreme Wind Warning Event Code /EWW/

The Extreme Wind Warning is an existing operational warning issued for advance notice of sustained surface wind speeds of 115 miles per hour or greater in association with major hurricanes. Extreme Wind Warnings are issued by all coastal NWS Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) in Southern Region and Eastern Region, including WFO San Juan, and the following inland WFOs: Albany (NY), Atlanta, Birmingham, Blacksburg, Columbia, Fort Worth, Greenville-Spartanburg, Jackson (MS), Raleigh, San Antonio and Shreveport.

- **For the remainder of the 2016 hurricane season**, NWS local WFOs will request an EAS activation using the Tornado Event Code /TOR/. NWS will broadcast on NWR and disseminate using Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) and 1050 Hz warning alarm tones.

- **Beginning with the 2017 hurricane season**, NWS will request EAS activations using the EWW Event Code /EWW/. NWS will broadcast on NWR and disseminate using SAME and 1050 Hz warning alarm tones.

The Storm Surge Watch/Warning is planned for operational use in 2017.

Storm Surge Watch Event Code /SSA/

For the Gulf and East coasts, NWS will issue the Storm Surge Watch for the possibility of life-threatening inundation from rising water moving inland within the specified area, generally within 48 hours, associated with a tropical, subtropical, or post-tropical cyclone.

NWS may issue this watch earlier when conditions, such as tropical storm-force winds, could reduce the time available for protective actions, such as evacuations. NWS also may issue a watch for locations not expected to receive life-threatening inundation but could potentially be isolated by inundation in adjacent areas.

NWS will broadcast Storm Surge Watches on NWR. WFOs may request EAS activation for the Storm Surge Watch when this has been incorporated into state and local EAS plans.

Storm Surge Warning Event Code /SSW/

For the Gulf and East coasts, NWS will issue the Storm Surge Warning to provide advance notice of life-threatening inundation from rising water moving inland within the specified area, generally

within 36 hours, associated with a tropical, subtropical or post-tropical cyclone.

NWS may issue a warning early when other conditions, such as the onset of tropical storm-force winds, are expected to reduce the time available to take protective actions, such as evacuations. NWS may also issue this warning for locations not expected to receive life-threatening inundation but which could potentially be isolated by inundation in adjacent areas.

WFOs will request EAS activation using the SSW Event Code. NWS will broadcast Storm Surge Warnings on NWR and disseminate using SAME and 1050 Hz warning alarm tones.

Local NWS offices are now reaching out to their respective State and Local Emergency Communications Committees, state emergency management agencies and broadcaster associations to answer questions and assist with the implementing the new Event Codes. To keep you updated about watch, warning and EAS changes in your area, your local WFO may issue Public Information Statements and Service Change Notices, update web pages, and air Public Service Announcements over NWR.

Broadcasters' EAS encoder/decoder equipment must be updated to implement the new Event Codes, generally through firmware and/or software updates.

Broadcasters in geographic areas potentially impacted by tropical cyclones should contact their EAS equipment manufacturer if update instructions are not received in a timely manner. If EAS equipment is not updated and the WFO requests EAS activation using the new Event Codes, the EAS encoder/decoder equipment will usually decode the information received as an "UNKNOWN" Event Code and the EAS will not automatically activate.

Existing SAME receivers, including Public Alert™ receivers, will process the new event codes.

For those receivers providing a limited, caption-like message display, the receiver will likely show wording such as "UNKNOWN WATCH" or "UNKNOWN WARNING." However, NWR SAME and Public Alert™ receivers should activate. NWR tone alert receivers should activate with the 1050 Hz tone for the warnings. NWS Headquarters will work with the receiver manufacturers to ensure the new codes are added to newly manufactured receivers.

NWS will issue further updates as these changes are implemented. Please send any dissemination questions to Tim Schott, NWS Dissemination Services Manager, at timothy.schott@noaa.gov or 301-427-9336; policy questions to Jessica Schauer, NWS Tropical Cyclone Services Manager, at jessica.schauer@noaa.gov or 305-229-4476; or contact the Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) at your local WFO for more detailed information. WCM contact information is provided at:
http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/contact.shtml

Related Websites

NWS Home Page:
http://www.weather.gov/
National Hurricane Center:
http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/
NHC Frequently Asked Questions:
http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/easfaq/
NWR Home Page:
http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/
NWS EAS Information
http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/info/eas_description.html