

# Equipping Mobile Phones with Broadcast Radio for Emergency Preparedness

## Issue

Nearly everyone has a mobile phone – it's how people keep in touch with family and friends while on the go. For little cost, manufacturers can include a receiver for broadcast radio in mobile phones. This would give consumers a convenient new way to access free radio service, and more importantly, improve public safety by ensuring that broadcasters' Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages and critical information reach the widest possible audience.

## History

Since the 1950s, broadcasters have been the backbone of the public warning system and remain so today. Broadcasters' emergency information goes well beyond providing EAS messages. Broadcasters often go live with wall-to-wall coverage during emergencies, providing valuable information on storm paths, evacuation routes and other critical information. The next generation of public alerting was envisioned in the post-9/11 world as integrating other technologies or platforms to reach Americans that may be on the move when a major incident occurs. Broadcasters fully support this goal, which would be furthered by including radio receivers in mobile devices.

## NAB Position

NAB has been working to explain to both mobile telephone operators and policymakers the benefits to the American public of expanding the availability of radio service in mobile phones.

Unlike the text-based commercial mobile alert system (CMAS) being developed by the wireless industry that is not yet available, radio in mobile handsets is ready today. Broadcast radio can work even when cell networks go down, which would hamper any text-based system. Hundreds of millions of mobile handsets in Europe already incorporate radio functionality, and in the United States, at least 30 models of mobile handsets currently have this capability.

Equipping mobile phones with broadcast radio also is a cost-effective way to ensure that the public has ready access to lifesaving information. It would cost \$1 or less per device to incorporate radio functionality in a mobile handset. There is no risk that radio receivers in mobile phones will clog up the existing switched wireless networks and impede the delivery of important emergency information.

Clearly, radio reception in mobile handsets will make Americans safer in the event of a disaster. A mobile handset with FM radio reception provides consumers with one-stop shopping for both emergency alerts and in-depth emergency information. In fact, a 2010 survey revealed that 73 percent of Americans believe having a radio-enabled mobile phone would be "important" during an emergency.

Broadcasters have been the primary source for emergency information for six decades. For the benefit of the American public, ensuring all mobile devices are broadcast radio ready should be a critical component of any next-generation wireless alerting solution.

*(Continued)*

**Action Needed**

Congress, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the mobile phone industry should consider ways to expand the availability of broadcast radio service in mobile phones.

Revised December 2011



1771 N Street NW  
Washington DC 20036 2800  
202 429 5300 [www.nab.org](http://www.nab.org)

Advocacy Education Innovation