

Public Media's Role in Emergency Services

Public media in the U.S. is locally managed and operated, allowing stations to easily collaborate with local governments, first responders, schools, businesses and others to provide real-time support in times of emergency. In many states and local communities, public media stations' digital and broadcast infrastructure now provides the backbone for emergency alert, public safety, first responder, and homeland security services.

Since September 11, 2001, CPB has invested in building local station capacity to assist emergency service providers. These partnerships include datacasting school blueprints to police cars when a crisis arises, providing



access to 24/7 camera feeds for public safety challenges, connecting public safety agencies in real time and much more. Many stations serve as their states' primary Emergency Alert Service hub for weather and AMBER Alerts. Stations also send emergency alert text messages through broadcast equipment to cell phone subscribers, reaching citizens wherever they are, even when the power is out.

Life-saving services that stations offer include:

- The [Florida Public Radio Emergency Network \(FPREN\)](#), a collaboration of 13 public radio stations headquartered at the University of Florida's WUFT-FM/TV in Gainesville, provides statewide multimedia updates during hurricanes or other emergencies to stations across the state, their websites, social media channels and on mobile devices via the Florida Storms app. The free app provides geotargeted information with live hurricane forecasts, evacuation routes and shelter details, and it live streams the closest Florida public radio station.
- **South Carolina Educational Television (SCETV)/South Carolina Public Radio** partnered with FPREN to launch the [SC Emergency Information Network \(SCEIN\)](#) to provide weather emergency content statewide. During Hurricane Florence in 2018, the South Carolina public media stations provided live updates, recorded content, Facebook Live events and on-air live reporting. SCETV serves as the liaison with the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, producing and coordinating the Governor's live briefings on all its channels. SCETV is the media of record for the state's Emergency Management Division.

- To reach diverse communities with health and safety information, [Twin Cities PBS](#) launched [TPT NOW](#), the nation's first 24/7 TV channel broadcasting real-time, emergency alerts in English, Spanish, Hmong and Somali. During the coronavirus pandemic, TPT NOW aired messages from the governor, the Minnesota Department of Health and the World Health Organization translated into multiple languages and made the translations available to other media.
- Through CPB grants to NPR, **63 public radio stations across 17 states** vulnerable to [earthquakes](#), [tornadoes](#) and hurricanes received the software and training to provide text and graphic alerts. The alerts are synchronized with over-the-air broadcast messages to be heard and seen on mobile phones, HD radios, "connected car" devices, Radio Data System displays, and online audio streaming. This new form of digital emergency alerting demonstrates how stations can bring lifesaving immediate emergency communications to audiences.
- [Alabama Public Television's \(APT\)](#) microwave system serves as the backbone of Alabama's Emergency Alert System, distributing national, state and local emergency broadcast signals to all radio and television broadcasters throughout the state. APT is also the hub for Alabama's AMBER Alert system to track missing children.
- [Vegas PBS](#) provides a full range of Emergency Alert Services, including severe weather and civil alerts. It broadcasts geo-targeted alerts on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security's Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN) system, which provides instant message-style warnings to wireless providers and their subscribers. PLAN sends emergency alerts to mobile devices in the affected areas.
- [Maine Public](#) broadcasting network makes its statewide spectrum available to federal and state authorities to communicate with first responders and the media in the event of an emergency. The one-way closed communication system works even when internet connections are down and the power is out.
- [South Dakota Public Broadcasting](#) serves as the emergency alert service hub for the state as well as the primary outlet for AMBER Alerts and weather warnings.
- [WHUT-TV](#) partners with the U.S. Park Police to distribute helicopter and other video services when large crowds gather in Washington, D.C. This work has been critical during Presidential inaugurations, the Fourth of July, protests and other large-scale events on the National Mall.
- [Houston Public Media \(KUHT\)](#) can deliver secure, encrypted IP data to targeted, multiple users while continuing its television broadcast service. This encrypted data delivery system can deliver a helicopter aerial feed to police, dashboard camera footage to firefighters, building blueprints to specific users, and television programs to public viewers all at the same time. These resources have been used during presidential debates, the Super Bowl and other major sporting events, and natural disasters such as Hurricane Harvey-related flooding.
- **Ohio Educational Television Stations, Inc.**, in partnership with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and the state's Broadcast Educational Media Commission (BEMC), is strengthening the state's emergency messaging infrastructure. The [Ohio Digital EAS](#) (OEAS) is an alternative, secure IP-based delivery system used to disseminate emergency information to the public and first responders utilizing all 12 of Ohio's public television stations, reaching virtually all 11.5 million Ohioans.
- During and after devastating floods in 2016, [Louisiana Public Broadcasting](#) provided critical information and valuable resources on air and online and functioned as a distribution center for much needed supplies, clothing and other donations from public broadcasting stations and their employees across the country. LPB raised relief funds for critically damaged and relocated schools through "Education and Recovery: LPB Gives Back," a special focusing on the needs of the affected schools. LPB employees set up Reading Corners with books and toys for children in the evacuation shelters.
- [CPB Honors WUFT, Florida Public Radio Emergency Network with Community Lifeline Award](#)
- [CPB Awards Grant to NPR to Help Public Radio Stations Improve Emergency Messaging](#)
- [Collaboration Helps Public Media Weather the Hurricanes](#)
- [PRSS Wins CPB Grant to Provide Metadata for California Disaster Simulation in October](#)
- [In Maine, MPBN Provides Emergency Communication Channel](#)