



December 22, 2022

The Honorable Senator Ed Markey
Office of Senator Ed Markey
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey,

I write today on behalf of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation (“Auto Innovators”)¹ in response to letters sent to vehicle manufacturers dated December 1, 2022. These letters urged automakers to maintain broadcast AM radio in current and future vehicles, including electric vehicles (EVs). As the leading voice of the auto industry, Auto Innovators takes this opportunity to provide an overall industry perspective on this important issue.

We appreciate your focus on ensuring that consumers have access to critical emergency response information via AM radio. The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) integrated public alert and warning system (IPAWS),² created in 2006 per Executive Order 13407,³ is the national public warning system that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Weather Radio.⁴ Executive Order 13407 also established roles for other federal agencies in the public alert system: the Federal Communications Commission oversees the emergency capabilities of communication systems; the Department of Commerce provides expertise regarding standards, technology, dissemination systems, and weather; and the Department of Defense ensures its functions are properly coordinated with the alert system.⁵ The system provides redundant alert mechanisms to ensure the public has access to multiple outlets to receive these critical alerts. The intent is not for the public to rely on one sole source to receive the alerts but to create a “net” of sources in which the public can receive them.

With the innovation of technology and methods of reaching the public, Congress and federal agencies have taken actions to modernize the national alert system and ensure the system can adapt and include emerging technologies. In 2015, Congress passed S. 1180, the “Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Modernization Act,” which established FEMA as the federal agency responsible for the public alert system.

¹ Auto Innovators is the singular, authoritative, and respected voice of the automotive industry, representing motor vehicle manufacturers responsible for nearly 98 percent of cars and light trucks sold in the U.S., original equipment suppliers, technology companies, and others within the automotive ecosystem.

² Integrated Public Alert & Warning System, FEMA.gov, 1 Jan. 2000, www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system.

³ Exec. Order No. 13407, June 2006, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/WCPD-2006-07-03/pdf/WCPD-2006-07-03-Pg1226.pdf>.

⁴ Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (n. 2)

⁵ Department of Homeland Security – Office of Inspector General, OIG-19-08 – FEMA’s Oversight of the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS), (Nov. 19, 2018), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2018-11/OIG-19-08-Nov18.pdf>, pg. 2
Footnote 3.



The law also directed FEMA to: 1) establish common alerting and warning protocols, standards, terminology, and operating procedures; and conduct training, tests, and exercises for the system; and 2) to the extent determined appropriate by the Administrator, incorporate multiple communications technologies. Moreover, the law required FEMA to design the system to adapt with and incorporate future technologies for communicating directly with the public, provide alerts to the largest portion of the affected population feasible, and improve the ability of remote areas to receive alerts.⁶

The legislation recognized technological innovations and the need for the national alert system to be able to incorporate them. The IPAWS Program Management Office also emphasized this in their Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2026, as it points out that one of the challenges for the system is that “the public is moving away from radio and broadcast/cable television as the primary channels for news and information.”⁷ FEMA has also highlighted this within its “IPAWS Process Map Playbook” released in February 2021, where “emerging technologies” are one of the alert sources listed.⁸ Technology advancements and the way the public consumes information constantly evolves, and IPAWS has made it a goal to find ways to communicate with the public however they receive information.

As innovation in the automotive industry continues and new technologies are developed, the federal government and industry must work together to modernize the IPAWS and continue to incorporate new technologies. Both the federal government and the automotive industry recognize that the ways in which consumers receive information will change with innovation. This is not only true in the United States but globally. There are also various approaches to AM radio that currently exist. In North America, many AM broadcasters have made their content available via digital formats and compatible smartphone applications. In Europe, analog AM radio broadcasts have been replaced with Digital Audio Broadcasts (DAB). In Japan, all AM radio stations are also simulcast on FM. As new technologies enter the marketplace, our industry will continue to seek innovative, enhanced methods that drive the deployment of advanced technologies and promote safety.

Auto Innovators and our members are committed to maintaining consumer access to vital safety information. As part of this effort, we have been meeting with the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and are in the preliminary stages of engaging FEMA to understand better how consumers can continue to access emergency broadcast information both inside and outside the vehicle. We look forward to working with you and other stakeholders to discuss both the policy and technical challenges that may be relevant to this issue.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

⁶ S. 1180, “Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Modernization Act of 2015,” 114th Cong., 2015

⁷ Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2022-2026, (Aug. 23, 2022), https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_ipaws-strategic-plan-fy-2022-2026.pdf, pg. 4

⁸ Connor Barrett, IPAWS Process Playbook, (Feb. 12, 2021), https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_ipaws-process-playbook-version-1.0_20210120.pdf, pg. 5

Sincerely,

Garrick C. Francis

Garrick Francis
Vice President, Federal Affairs
Alliance for Automotive Innovation