

February 26, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We, the undersigned former leaders of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with decades of experience in protecting the public interest, ask that you secure assurances from automakers that they will put public safety before profits by maintaining AM radios in their vehicles.

Few innovations in the 21st century have benefited consumers more than the transformative breakthrough of electric vehicles in the automotive industry. However, some EV manufacturers have begun removing AM radios from their cars due to resolvable signal interference. Should this continue, it will represent a grave threat to future local, state, and federal disaster response and relief efforts.

Federal law mandates that FEMA always maintain its ability to deliver messages to the American people en masse. The National Public Warning System, the only method the government has to reach every point of the country at once, allows it to do so.

Because of the great distances that its signal carries, and due to its resiliency during even the worst natural disasters, the success of the National Public Warning System hinges on the use of AM radio. However, should EV makers continue removing AM radios from their vehicles, this vital public safety system will no longer function as intended.

This will become especially problematic as the country comes closer to achieving your goal of making 50-percent of the vehicles on the road electric by 2030. The National Public Warning System could become disconnected from as much as half the country, and FEMA will lose its ability to communicate with the public as federal law demands.

Reconciling electric motors' response to broadcast reception is a small price to pay for protecting public safety, and it's critical that the United States' leading transportation policymaker make automakers aware of this fact. These companies benefited substantially from the many EV incentives passed within the Inflation Reduction Act, and we are calling on them to use just a small portion of these funds to protect the public interest.

For all these reasons and more, we ask that you do everything you can to ensure automakers maintain the AM radio in their dashes.

Sincerely,

James Lee Witt
1993-2001

Craig Fugate
2009-2017

Joe M. Allbaugh
2001-2003

Brock Long
2017-2019

Michael Brown
2003-2005

Pete Gaynor
2019-2021

David Paulison
2006-2009

CC House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
House Committee on Homeland Security
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
House Appropriations Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
House Committee on Energy and Commerce