



Telecom Notice of Consultation CRTC 2016-115

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Ottawa, 29 March 2016

File number: 1011-NOC2016-0115

Call for comments

Participation by wireless service providers in the National Public Alerting System

Deadline for submission of interventions: 30 May 2016

[\[Submit an intervention or view related documents\]](#)

The Commission invites comments on whether to require wireless service providers to participate in Canada's National Public Alerting System, which will ensure that Canadians receive timely warnings of imminent threats to life and property on mobile devices.

By 30 May 2016, parties are invited to provide detailed comments, with supporting rationale, on the topics raised in this notice, as well as to submit their own proposals on related topics.

Background

1. Emergency alert messages are issued by public officials (such as emergency management officials [EMOs]) for immediate distribution to the public to warn of dangers to life and property. These messages contain information relating to the nature of the threat, the area affected, and actions the public should take. Some emergency alert messages relate specifically to imminent or unfolding dangers to life (including tornadoes, forest fires, industrial disasters, and tsunamis) for which an immediate public call to action is required. These emergency alert messages are referred to as “broadcast immediate alert messages.”
2. The provision of emergency alert messages is achieved through the National Public Alerting System (NPAS). At the core of the NPAS is the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination (NAAD) System, which is operated by Pelmorex Communications Inc. Launched in June 2010, the NAAD System authenticates emergency alert messages issued by authorized public officials and disseminates these messages to last-mile distributors, such as broadcasters and broadcasting distribution undertakings (BDUs), for distribution to the public.

3. In Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2014-444, the Commission made amendments to the *Radio Regulations, 1986*, the *Television Broadcasting Regulations, 1987*, and the *Broadcasting Distribution Regulations* to make participation in the NPAS mandatory for BDUs as well as most radio and over-the-air (OTA) television broadcasters.
4. EMOs, and government departments such as Environment Canada, are authorized to issue emergency alert messages through the NAAD System and, as noted above, the broadcasting industry must distribute broadcast immediate alert messages through their participation in the NPAS.
5. In Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2014-444, the Commission strongly encouraged, as it previously did in Broadcasting Decision 2011-438, the use of digital media and mobile platforms to alert Canadians to imminent or unfolding dangers, particularly given the growing use of mobile devices by Canadians.
6. The Commission's 2015 *Communications Monitoring Report* indicates that 83% of the Canadian population own a cell phone, and 66% own an advanced handheld device such as a smartphone. The use of these devices relies on the advanced wireless network and/or the long-term evolution (LTE) network,¹ which support voice and data services. The advanced wireless network, which provides lower-speed data services, is available to 99.3% of the Canadian population, whereas the LTE network, which delivers higher-speed data services, is available to approximately 92.8% of Canadians.
7. Accordingly, through the participation of wireless service providers (WSPs) in the NPAS, an even greater number of Canadians could be notified of imminent or unfolding dangers. Emergency alert messages sent via mobile networks would be received in a timely way, since a majority of Canadians carry their mobile devices with them at all times.
8. In the *CRTC Three-Year Plan 2015-2018*, the Commission indicated its ongoing support and commitment to ensuring that additional measures to safeguard the lives of Canadians through emergency alerting are implemented.
9. In Telecom Decision 2015-482, the Commission denied an application from Bruce Power regarding immediate implementation of wireless public alerting (WPA). However, in its decision, the Commission reiterated its ongoing commitment to emergency alerting, and indicated that it would be more appropriate to have a broad public proceeding to consider both the policy and technical matters relating to WPA in a more fulsome manner, with participation by all affected WSPs and other stakeholders. Accordingly, the Commission announced that it intended to initiate such a broad consultation before the end of fiscal year 2015-2016.

¹ The advanced wireless network is also commonly referred to as the 3G network, and includes wireless standards such as high-speed packet access (HSPA) and Evolution Data Optimized (EV-DO), while the LTE network is referred to as the 4G network.

Existing WPA in other jurisdictions and WPA trials in Canada

10. WPA has already been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions, using one of two known technologies to provide the service. In the United States, emergency alert messages are identified as Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) and are delivered to mobile devices using Cell Broadcasting (CB) technology.² Through a partnership between the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, WSPs have voluntarily participated in the distribution of WEAs since 2012.
11. In Australia, the implementation of WPA is based on the country's Emergency Alert national telephone warning system, using location-based Short Message Service (LB-SMS) technology.³
12. In Canada, both CB and LB-SMS technologies have been explored and tested as possible solutions for the provision of WPA. LB-SMS technology was selected in a test of WPA conducted by Bruce Power.⁴ Meanwhile, there is a pilot project overseen by Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) that is currently evaluating CB technology.

Development of requirements

13. The Commission notes the efforts of the working group of Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management (SOREM) in the development of technical requirements for a WPA service in Canada.⁵ The technical requirements outline the expectations of federal, provincial, and territorial alerting originators for such a service.
14. In addition, in 2014, Public Safety Canada requested that the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee's (CISC) Network Technology Working Group (NTWG), which included the participation of WSPs, assist in the development of technical requirements for a WPA service in Canada.⁶ A consensus was reached in the development of two separate specifications: the network design for interconnecting

² With this technology, emergency alert messages are automatically broadcast to and received by all cell phones simultaneously in the vicinity of cell towers that are in an area subject to an alert.

³ With LB-SMS technology, emergency alert messages are sent to each cell phone individually via standard text messaging in an area subject to an alert.

⁴ This test subsequently led Bruce Power to file its application with the Commission regarding immediate implementation of WPA.

⁵ Further information can be found in *SOREM Public Alerting Working Group – FPT Requirements for Wireless Public Alerting*, which is available in the “Contributions” section of the NTWG page, located on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca.

⁶ Further information on the CISC work related to WPA can be found in *Wireless Public Alerting Service (WPAS) Specifications*, which is available in the “Reports” section of the NTWG page, located on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca.

the NAAD system with WSP networks, and the mobile device specifications.⁷ The work related to mobile device specifications resulted in the creation of a standard adopted by the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS) known as the *Canadian wireless public alerting service (WPAS) LTE mobile device behavior specification* (ATIS 0700021).⁸

15. Finally, the DRDC Centre for Security Science, through the Canadian Safety and Security Program, is currently working with numerous parties to demonstrate a CB-based WPA project using the above-noted technical requirements developed by the NTWG, and the ATIS standard. In this project, they are undertaking steps to build, test, and operate an effective WPA service. Results and a report from this project are expected later in 2016.

Call for comments

16. As a result of this proceeding, the Commission could impose additional obligations on some or all mobile WSPs, including resellers, whether or not they choose to become parties to this proceeding.
17. As a result of the *Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 2*, the *Telecommunications Act* was amended to include new section 24.1. Under this new section, the Commission has the power to impose directly on non-carriers conditions related to the offering and provision of telecommunications services.⁹
18. The Commission calls for comments, with supporting evidence and rationale, on the following topics:

General

- whether participation in WPA should be mandatory for all Canadian WSPs, including primary brands, extension brands, and resellers, and imposed as a condition of service under sections 24 and 24.1 of the *Telecommunications Act*;
- whether receipt of wireless emergency alert messages should be mandatory, or whether individual users should have the option to opt out of or silence such alerts on their mobile devices;

⁷ Further information on these specifications can be found in *Canadian Wireless Public Alerting Service (WPAS) C-Interface Specification* and *Canadian Wireless Public Alerting Service (WPAS) 6 LTE Mobile Device Requirements*, which are available in the “Reports” section of the NTWG page, located on the Commission’s website at www.crtc.gc.ca.

⁸ ATIS is a standards-setting body based in the United States whose standards are used by telecommunications equipment manufacturers to ensure common functionality and interoperability.

⁹ Section 24.1 states that the offering and provision of any telecommunications service by any person other than a Canadian carrier are subject to any conditions imposed by the Commission, including those relating to (a) service terms and conditions in contracts with users of telecommunications services; (b) protection of the privacy of those users; (c) access to emergency services; and (d) access to telecommunications services by persons with disabilities.

Implementation

- if participation in WPA were mandated, by when it would be appropriate for WSPs to participate (e.g. timeline to implement the technology needed to enable WPA);
- estimated efforts and costs for WSPs to implement the technology required to offer WPA;
- the estimated time it would take for broadcast immediate alert messages to reach all users in an affected area, and how Canadians can be assured of the authenticity of emergency alert messages received on their mobile devices;
- assuming that WPA is implemented immediately, what percentage of mobile device users could receive emergency alert messages, detailing obstacles in reaching all users, and how this percentage would change over time;
- what impact the implementation of WPA would have on Canadian consumers (e.g. costs), how any impacts could be minimized, and what actions could be taken to increase the number of users covered;

Technical and standards

- whether alerts should be based on standards such as the NPAS Common Look and Feel Guidance 1.1, ATIS 0700021, or some other standard or combination of standards;
- given the technical requirements developed by SOREM, whether the Commission should direct WSPs to use specific technologies, or allow the market and service providers to determine the best solution;

Monitoring, compliance, and testing

- what monitoring and compliance measures should be put in place to ensure full participation by the wireless industry;
- whether an awareness campaign is necessary to educate the Canadian public on WPA, and who should be responsible for such a campaign;
- whether there should be a testing schedule for WPA, and whether it should coincide with the NPAS testing schedule; and
- any other comments that are relevant to WPA within the scope of this proceeding.

Procedure

19. The *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure* (the Rules of Procedure) apply to this proceeding. The Rules of Procedure set out, among other things, the rules for the content, format, filing, and service of interventions, answers, replies, and requests for information; the procedure for filing confidential information and requesting its disclosure; and the conduct of public hearings. Accordingly, the procedure set out below must be read in conjunction with the Rules of Procedure and related documents, which can be found on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca, under "[Statutes and Regulations](#)." The guidelines set out in Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-959 provide information to help interested persons and parties understand the Rules of Procedure so that they can more effectively participate in Commission proceedings.
20. All non-carriers and all Canadian carriers who provide mobile wireless services are made parties to this proceeding and may file interventions with the Commission regarding the above-noted issues by **30 May 2016**.
21. Interested persons who wish to become parties to this proceeding must file an intervention with the Commission regarding the above-noted issues by **30 May 2016**. The intervention must be filed in accordance with section 26 of the Rules of Procedure.
22. Parties are permitted to coordinate, organize, and file, in a single submission, interventions by other interested persons who share their position. Information on how to file this type of submission, known as a joint supporting intervention, as well as a [template](#) for the accompanying cover letter to be filed by parties, can be found in Telecom Information Bulletin 2011-693.
23. The Commission may request information, in the form of interrogatories, from any party to the proceeding, by **20 June 2016**.
24. Responses to requests for information are to be filed with the Commission by **15 July 2016**.
25. All parties may file final comments with the Commission by **25 July 2016**.
26. The Commission encourages interested persons and parties to monitor the record of this proceeding, available on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca, for additional information that they may find useful when preparing their submissions.
27. Submissions longer than five pages should include a summary. Each paragraph of all submissions should be numbered, and the line *****End of document***** should follow the last paragraph. This will help the Commission verify that the document has not been damaged during electronic transmission.
28. Pursuant to Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin 2015-242, the Commission expects incorporated entities and associations, and encourages all

Canadians, to file submissions for Commission proceedings in accessible formats (for example, text-based file formats that enable text to be enlarged or modified, or read by screen readers). To provide assistance in this regard, the Commission has posted on its website [guidelines](#) for preparing documents in accessible formats.

29. Submissions must be filed by sending them to the Secretary General of the Commission using **only one** of the following means:

by completing the
[\[Intervention form\]](#)

or

by mail to
CRTC, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

or

by fax to
819-994-0218

30. Parties who send documents electronically must ensure that they will be able to prove, upon Commission request, that service/filing of a particular document was completed. Accordingly, parties must keep proof of the sending and receipt of each document for 180 days after the date on which the document is filed. The Commission advises parties who file and serve documents by electronic means to exercise caution when using email for the service of documents, as it may be difficult to establish that service has occurred.
31. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, a document must be received by the Commission and all relevant parties by 5 p.m. Vancouver time (8 p.m. Ottawa time) on the date it is due. Parties are responsible for ensuring the timely delivery of their submissions and will not be notified if their submissions are received after the deadline. Late submissions, including those due to postal delays, will not be considered by the Commission and will not be made part of the public record.
32. The Commission will not formally acknowledge submissions. It will, however, fully consider all submissions, which will form part of the public record of the proceeding, provided that the procedure for filing set out above has been followed.

Important notice

33. All information that parties provide as part of this public process, except information designated confidential, whether sent by postal mail, facsimile, email, or through the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca, becomes part of a publicly accessible file and will be posted on the Commission's website. This includes all personal information, such as full names, email addresses, postal/street addresses, and telephone and facsimile numbers.

34. The personal information that parties provide will be used and may be disclosed for the purpose for which the information was obtained or compiled by the Commission, or for a use consistent with that purpose.
35. Documents received electronically or otherwise will be posted on the Commission's website in their entirety exactly as received, including any personal information contained therein, in the official language and format in which they are received. Documents not received electronically will be available in PDF format.
36. The information that parties provide to the Commission as part of this public process is entered into an unsearchable database dedicated to this specific public process. This database is accessible only from the web page of this particular public process. As a result, a general search of the Commission's website with the help of either its search engine or a third-party search engine will not provide access to the information that was provided as part of this public process.

Availability of documents

37. Electronic versions of the interventions and other documents referred to in this notice are available on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca by using the file number provided at the beginning of this notice or by visiting the "Participate" section of the Commission's website, selecting "Submit Ideas and Comments," then selecting "our open processes." Documents can then be accessed by clicking on the links in the "Subject" and "Related Documents" columns associated with this particular notice.
38. Documents are also available from Commission offices, upon request, during normal business hours.

Commission offices

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Secretary General

Related documents

- *Bruce Power – Application to implement wireless public alerting*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2015-482, 28 October 2015
- *Filing submissions for Commission proceedings in accessible formats*, Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2015-242, 8 June 2015
- *Amendments to various regulations, the standard conditions of licence for video-on-demand undertakings and certain exemption orders – Provisions requiring the mandatory distribution of emergency alert messages*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2014-444 and Broadcasting Orders CRTC 2014-445, 2014-446, 2014-447, and 2014-448, 29 August 2014
- *Filing of joint supporting interventions*, Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2011-693, 8 November 2011
- *The Weather Network/Météomédia – Licence renewal and extension of the mandatory distribution of the service*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2011-438, 22 July 2011
- *Guidelines on the CRTC Rules of Practice and Procedure*, Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2010-959, 23 December 2010