



LOCAL SERVICE NATIONAL VOICE

JOHN M. LAWSON  
*President & Chief Executive Officer*

September 29, 2005

Chairman Kevin J. Martin  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

I applaud your September 22 testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, in which you called for a “comprehensive alert system that allows officials at the national, state and local levels to reach affected citizens in the most effective and efficient manner possible.” You suggested that this updated alert system should incorporate the Internet and “other advances in technology so that officials can reach large numbers of people simultaneously through different communications media.” On September 15, you also announced the intention to establish a Blue Ribbon panel to perform an independent review of the impact of Hurricane Katrina and to make recommendations to the FCC concerning ways to improve disaster preparedness, network robustness and reliability and public safety operations.

I am writing to highlight how public television’s digital broadcast infrastructure can provide the comprehensive alert system you seek and to request a seat at the Blue Ribbon panel to provide our insight into how to create such a system.

Last year APTS signed an agreement to work cooperatively with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at DHS to demonstrate how datacasting over public television’s digital transmissions can enhance the effectiveness of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The goals of the six-month pilot program, centered in the National Capitol Region, were to support the authorized distribution of digital all-hazards EAS messages, by secure and non-secure means, to televisions, radios, personal computers, wireless networks, direct satellite and other transmission media. The demonstrations used FEMA-generated EAS test messages sent through selected public television access points and then immediately broadcast to a variety of relays and/or end-user devices.

The six-month pilot was so successful that the Department of Homeland Security signed a six-month extension with APTS to expand the pilot to several other geographic areas and to plan the roll-out of a national Digital Emergency Alert System (DEAS) using the public television digital infrastructure as a critical element. Further details concerning our DEAS pilot with FEMA and the role public television can play in providing alert and warning are provided in the attached document.

**The Association of  
Public Television Stations**

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I look forward to further discussing with you these exciting opportunities for public digital television's service to the American public. Additionally, I am hopeful that you will favorably consider my request to serve on the Blue Ribbon panel that you are forming. I believe I could offer valuable input to the panel's work in examining ways to improve disaster preparedness and response, as well as public safety operations, while taking advantage of the "dual use" opportunity created by public television's digital build out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Lawson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Enclosure

cc: Catherine Bohigian, Office of Chairman Martin  
Donna Gregg, Media Bureau  
Kenneth Moran, Office of Homeland Security