

VPS Memo

PSHSB Counsels EAS Participants to Take Immediate Actions to Safeguard Devices

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued an [advisory](#) on August 1, 2022, concerning a potential vulnerability in certain Emergency Alert System (EAS) encoder/decoder devices that have not been updated to most recent software versions. It is FEMA's observation that unauthorized actors could issue false alerts over Internet-accessible EAS infrastructure, if the devices are not currently up to date. The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) previously warned EAS participants about the vulnerability via email on April 24, 2020, and again advises communications providers to take definitive measures to ensure that their EAS equipment's monitoring and transmitting functions are available whenever the stations and systems are operating.

Recommendations

Regardless of the make and model of EAS equipment, PSHSB recommends that equipment software and firmware be upgraded to the most recent versions recommended by the manufacturer and secured behind a properly configured firewall immediately. In addition, the following proactive measures can help improve the cyber security of EAS systems moving forward:

- Change the default passwords.
- Install the manufacturer's software security patches as soon as they become available.
- Continually monitor equipment and software; and review audit logs to detect and report incidents of unauthorized access.
- Review the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council's [list of recommended best practices](#) to address data security.

Participation in EAS requires adherence to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules and regulations. In the event of a failure to receive or transmit EAS messages during national tests or actual emergencies due to equipment failure, EAS participants may be subjected to FCC sanctions, including substantial monetary forfeitures.

Additional Information

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