

FCC Issues EAS Security Warning

February 14, 2013

A day after hackers briefly hijacked the airwaves of 10 television stations in five states and broadcast an Emergency Alert System (EAS) alert warning of an impending zombie attack, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) issued a stern reminder for media outlets to secure access to their Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) EAS systems. EAS warnings provide the public with alerts and a warning system, and the zombie hoax underscored the systems' vulnerabilities.

The FCC urged all EAS participants to take immediate action to:

- Change their CAP EAS passwords from default factory settings, including all user and administrator accounts;
- Update their firewalls and ensure they are up to date; and
- Ensure no unauthorized EAS messages are in the queue for transmission.

The Commission also recommended disconnecting the device's Ethernet connection if passwords could not be reset until the passwords and other security settings were updated.

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