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News Release

What to Expect During the November 17 Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test

Radio and television programming will be briefly interrupted. No action is required by the public.

PHILADELPHIA — Residents across Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia can expect a brief interruption to radio and television programming on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2026, for a scheduled test of the Emergency Alert System.

At approximately 2:20 p.m. EST, radio and television broadcasters, cable systems, satellite radio and television providers, and wireline video providers nationwide will interrupt normal programming to relay a test message. The message will clearly state that this is only a test and that no action is required by the public. When the test has concluded, normal programming will resume.

“During an emergency, every second is crucial,” said FEMA Administrator Cameron Hamilton. “FEMA’s alert and warning systems ensure that no second is wasted getting you the critical information needed to keep you safe. Operational tests, like the one to be conducted tomorrow, allow us to identify and fix potential issues before an actual emergency occurs.”

FEMA’s Emergency Alert System is a national public warning system made up of thousands of radio, television, cable, satellite and wireline video providers. Through the Emergency Alert System, the President can address the American people or share life-saving information with the public during a national emergency. FEMA is required by law to conduct a nationwide test of the public alert and warning system at least once every three years. These tests allow FEMA to identify technical or operational issues before the system is needed during an actual emergency.

If the test cannot be conducted on Nov. 17, 2026, the backup date is Thursday, Dec. 3, 2026.

For more information, visit the 2026 Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test webpage on FEMA.gov.

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