Thomas J. Beers  
Chief, Policy Division  
Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th St., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554  

Dear Mr. Beers:

The Virginia State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC) and the National Weather Service (NWS) will conduct a statewide tornado drill and Emergency Alert System (EAS) test on March 20, 2012, at 9:45 a.m.; March 21, 2012, is the backup date. The Commonwealth of Virginia respectfully requests a waiver of the FCC Rules to allow use of the “TOR” code to fully test our systems in preparation of the upcoming severe weather season. Participants will include broadcasters, schools, state and local emergency management, hospitals, nursing homes, and others.

The “TOR” code will be originated by NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) and distributed via the Virginia EAS network. Broadcasters, with the exception of LP or SP facilities, may choose to intercept and not broadcast the drill message. Since this special test will meet the conditions set forth in Section 11.61 (a) (4) of the commission’s rules, this test will serve as a substitute for the March RMT.

The live code test is also necessary to activate NOAA Weather Radios provided by the Department of Homeland Security to public, private, and parochial schools statewide, confirming their proper operation during an emergency. Weather Radios do NOT activate an audio alarm for RWT or RMT codes; therefore, the “TOR” event code is required to test the full system (origination to public alert) and assure proper operation during an emergency.

Partner organizations for this test include the Virginia Association of Broadcasters, state and local emergency management, universities, colleges, elementary and secondary schools throughout Virginia.

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Partners will publicize the drill via on-air broadcasts by television meteorologists, public service announcements from radio and television stations, National Weather Service Public Information Statements, news releases, and e-mail. These notifications will begin at least 45 days prior to the planned test.

Please contact Michael Nelson at 804-674-2400 or michael.nelson@vdem.virginia.gov, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Michael M. Cline

MMC/man

"Working to Protect People, Property and Our Communities"