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NEWS RELEASE

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For Release: Immediate

PEMA TO CONDUCT STATEWIDE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM TEST THIS WEEK

(Nazareth) (March 12, 2010)-- Northampton County Emergency Management Director Robert Mateff today informed residents of an upcoming test of the statewide Emergency Alert System during Weather Emergency Preparedness Week.

Mateff said the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency will conduct the statewide monthly EAS test on Friday, March 19, at 9:15 a.m.

According to the director, the severe weather emergency exercise gives local and county emergency personnel, schools, hospitals, and other private special care facilities the chance to review, test, and evaluate their emergency plans under a non-emergency scenario.

“During the exercise, the National Weather Service and PEMA will provide information over our normal weather communications systems,” said Mateff. “Over the course of several hours, as the scenario conditions develop into a more serious weather event, we will alert county and municipal staff, as well as officials at those private facilities, to review their emergency plans so they would know what to do in case of a real emergency.”

Mateff said the EAS network is an effective way to inform the public about potential severe weather so that emergency plans can be enacted in a timely manner and the appropriate precautions be taken to protect lives and property.

The Emergency Alert System is a voluntary network of more than 300 radio and television stations across the state that have agreed to provide access to their broadcast capability to authorized federal, state and local officials. It serves as an essential communications link between government and the public.

When conditions occur that threaten public safety, emergency management officials activate the EAS system. Using an electronic notification system and the procedures defined in the state's EAS plan, area radio and television stations receive and re-broadcast the information from the emergency management agency.

During Weather Emergency Preparedness Week in Pennsylvania, emergency preparedness officials urge residents to identify what severe weather events could happen where they live and to develop a family emergency response plan. This plan describes what to do and where to go if severe weather occurs. It should be in writing and should be reviewed regularly with all family members, and should be updated as necessary.

The Commonwealth recently unveiled a new Web site designed to help citizens prepare for emergencies before they happen. Emergency kit checklists and family plan templates can be downloaded free of charge at www.ReadyPA.org.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This important information was provided by Northampton County Emergency Management Services as part of Pennsylvania's Weather Emergency Preparedness Week