

Not the First, but the

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The blooper by the Emergency Broadcast System yesterday was not the first instance of things going wrong with it, but the other mistakes were less noticeable.

There was the time when teletype tape of the warning message was put in backwards. It took hours to get the Associated Press and United Press International broadcast wires going again.

The military takes control of the wires for the tests, as it would for the real thing, and the news services can't use the wires until the military releases them.

Those familiar with the system recall too when the military took control of the wire and then sent no message.

The nearest to the alarm yesterday occurred about 10 years ago when, as in the current incident, someone put in the real thing. But the mistake was caught in time to confine the alert to about 10 states.

The tests are held regularly each week at 6 a.m. PST on Saturday and at 5:30 a.m. PST Sunday. Because the wrong message came at the regular test time yesterday, many stations continued normal operation while checking to see if there was a mistake.

Perforated Tape

The news service teletypes are operated by running perforated tape through transmitters. The message or news story then is sent out simultaneously throughout the country.

When the military at Colorado Springs takes control of the two national broadcast wires, it automatically connects with all regional broadcast circuits.



TUNNEL (ARROW) LEADS TO ALERT CENTER
NORAD warning base is inside Cheyenne Mountain,
—AP Photo

Then the printer bell in each station rings 10 times followed by a line of Xs and 10 more bells. Then comes the message:

If it's not a test you would receive a message authenticator word followed by the emergency action notification — possibly a civil defense attack warning message — and the same mes-

sage authenticator word transmitted again.

TESTING EMERGENCY
ACTION NOTIFICATION
SYSTEM—REPEAT—

TESTING EMERGENCY
ACTION NOTIFICATION
SYSTEM

TESTING EMERGENCY
ACTION NOTIFICATION
SYSTEM—REPEAT—

TESTING EMERGENCY

ACTION NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

The stations which would be authorized to continue broadcasts during the emergency would announce the test, observe a few seconds of silence except for a loud beep and an announcement that a test was held of the warning system.

The Real Thing

Then the military would release the news service wires to return to normal operation, using the bells and Xs again.

If there is a real emergency the system is to be triggered by the President through the White House Communications Agency.

A second method is for the President to use the White House Communications Agency to link with key points of the radio and television networks. The key points are here and in New York.

The networks link in all

The third method, used primarily by any station not equipped for the other two, is to monitor a designated key station in its area. The country is divided into areas with key stations designated in each.

There are also leased teletype connections between the key stations and those not geared to the first two methods of warning.

The system is supposed to be tested once each week at irregular times between 8:30 a.m. local time and sunset. The TV stations discontinue their normal programs for 60 seconds, displaying a slide explaining the test.

To enhance security the code words for authenticating messages are changed each month.

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their affiliates and provide the facilities for transmitting whatever the emergency demands, such as a presidential broadcast.