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thought that the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System was something spectacular.

And it was. A spectacular failure.

Some television and radio stations carried it; some did not. Some cable channels aired it, while their over-the-air counterparts failed to. Direct TV subscribers were treated to a rendition of Lady Gaga's song "Paparazzi" instead of the test announcement. Some viewers of Comcast in Virginia were switched to the QVC network instead.

Viewers of Fox News and ESPN were told the alert was coming, but it never did. CNN had the same problem. Many TV and radio stations simply had two to four minutes of dead air.

Created in the 1950s, the EAS is supposed to be a means for the US government to inform citizens of an impending national disaster. And while that mandate has been updated through the years, the system has not. When Hurricane Katrina wiped out much of the Gulf Coast...well, the system was silent. Three planes slammed into the twin towers in New York and the Pentagon in northern Virginia...not a peep. The system was tested nationally, and we heard...Lady Gaga.

If the massive failure of the test proved anything, it is that we can lay to rest the idea that the EAS is some sort of secret "kill switch" that will allow the government to take over all broadcasting.

Further, there is something reassuring in the idea that when the nukes are raining down...when that big asteroid hits...when December 21 of 2012 gets here...

Well, at least in the last few seconds we will still know the latest sports scores.

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