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Lunch with a bit of PEP

WJR hosts emergency alerting community



Paul McLane
Editor in Chief

In July the engineering team at Cumulus Media station WJR(AM) in Detroit hosted members of the emergency alerting community from around southeast Michigan for a tour of its transmitter site.

I spotted the group photo in the newsletter of the Michigan Association of Broadcasters and thought it seemed an excellent example of how broadcasters can interact with local authorities.

In recent years the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been conducting a program to harden Emergency Alert System infrastructure at several dozen of the country's 77 Primary Entry Point stations in the

National Public Warning System.

These PEP stations, as most RW readers know, work with FEMA to provide emergency alert and warning information to the public before, during and after incidents and disasters. They're also a primary source of initial broadcast for a national alert. They need to withstand natural disasters and man-made events to ensure continuity of operations.

The "all-hazards" FEMA upgrades include increased sheltering capabilities, expanded broadcast capacity and sustainable power generation for all types of hazardous events. Studios in standalone modules ensure that PEP radio stations are capable of broadcasting during and after emergencies when other communication sources may be down.

WJR is the PEP station for Michigan and in 2018 it was the first in the country to receive the upgrade.

Dan Kelley, MAB's director of technical services and co-chair of Michigan's State Emergency Communications Committee, told me that he and Jaclyn Barcroft of the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division met a while back with Manny Centeno. As the program manager for the FEMA's Integrated Public Alert & Warning System, he was responsible for coordinating these upgrades. (Centeno recently was promoted to IPAWS director.)



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