

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5324

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 12, 2022

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation

AN ACT

To provide guidance for and investment in the upgrade and modernization of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards network, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “NOAA Weather Radio
3 Modernization Act of 2021” or “NWR Modernization Act
4 of 2021”.

5 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

6 (a) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator”
7 means the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
8 Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic
9 and Atmospheric Administration.

10 (b) NOAA WEATHER RADIO.—The term “NOAA
11 Weather Radio” means the National Oceanic and Atmos-
12 pheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards net-
13 work.

14 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

15 Congress finds the following:

16 (1) The NOAA Weather Radio is a nationwide
17 network of transmitters that are critical to pro-
18 tecting life and property by broadcasting weather
19 and other hazard alerts.

20 (2) NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts currently
21 reach 95 percent of the United States population.

22 (3) NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts originate
23 from all National Weather Service Offices, but are
24 only available via a receiver located in sufficient
25 proximity to a radio transmitting tower.

1 (4) There are limited options to obtain NOAA
2 Weather Radio broadcasts via the Internet or mobile
3 device application, which are provided by volunteer
4 mechanisms obtaining the audio feed in an ad hoc
5 manner.

6 (5) NOAA Weather Radio should provide equal
7 access and availability to unimpeded broadcasts of
8 weather and non-weather hazards to every person lo-
9 cated within the United States, its territories, and
10 tribal lands.

11 **SEC. 4. UPGRADING EXISTING SYSTEMS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall, to the
13 maximum extent practicable, expand coverage of the
14 NOAA Weather Radio and ensure its reliability. In doing
15 so, the Administrator shall—

16 (1) maintain support for existing systems serv-
17 ing areas not covered by or having poor quality cel-
18 lular service;

19 (2) ensure consistent maintenance and oper-
20 ations monitoring, with timely repairs to broadcast
21 transmitter site equipment and antennas; and

22 (3) enhance the ability to amplify Non-Weather
23 Emergency Messages via NOAA Weather Radio as
24 necessary.

1 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 \$20,000,000 to remain available until expended.

4 (c) EXPANDING ACCESS.—As part of the activities in
5 this section, the Administrator shall acquire additional
6 transmitters as required to expand coverage to rural and
7 underserved communities, national parks, and recreation
8 areas.

9 **SEC. 5. MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—In parallel to the activities under
11 section 4, the Administrator shall, to the maximum extent
12 practicable, enhance NOAA Weather Radio to ensure its
13 capabilities and coverage remain valuable to the public. In
14 carrying out these activities, the Administrator shall—

15 (1) upgrade the telecommunications infrastruc-
16 ture to accelerate the transition of broadcasts to
17 Internet Protocol-based communications over non-
18 copper media;

19 (2) accelerate software upgrades to the Ad-
20 vanced Weather Interactive Processing System, or
21 the relevant system successors, in order to imple-
22 ment partial county notifications and alerts;

23 (3) consult with relevant stakeholders, including
24 the private sector, to enhance accessibility and
25 usability of NOAA Weather Radio data and feeds;

1 (4) develop options, including, but not limited
2 to, satellite backup capability and commercial pro-
3 vider partnerships for NOAA Weather Radio con-
4 tinuity in the event of Weather Forecast Office out-
5 ages;

6 (5) research and develop alternative options, in-
7 cluding, but not limited to, microwave capabilities, to
8 transmit NOAA Weather Radio signals to transmit-
9 ters that are remote or do not have IP capability;
10 and

11 (6) transition critical applications to the Inte-
12 grated Dissemination Program, or the relevant pro-
13 gram successors.

14 (b) PRIORITY.—In carrying out the objectives de-
15 scribed in subsection (a), the Administrator shall prioritize
16 practices, capabilities, and technologies recommended by
17 the assessment in subsection (c), to maximize accessibility,
18 particularly in remote and underserved areas of the coun-
19 try.

20 (c) ASSESSMENT FOR MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION.—Not later than 12 months after the date of enact-
21 ment of this Act, the Administrator shall complete an as-
22 sessment of access to NOAA Weather Radio. In con-
23 ducting such an assessment, the Administrator shall take
24 into consideration and provide recommendations on—
25

1 (1) the need for continuous, adequate, and
2 operational real-time broadcasts of the NOAA
3 Weather Radio in both urban and rural areas;

4 (2) solicited inputs from relevant stakeholders
5 on the compatibility of NOAA Weather Radio data
6 for third party platforms that provide online serv-
7 ices, such as websites and mobile device applications,
8 or deliver NOAA Weather Radio access;

9 (3) existing or new management systems, which
10 promote consistent, efficient, and compatible access
11 to NOAA Weather Radio;

12 (4) the ability of NOAA to aggregate real time
13 broadcast feeds at one or more central locations;

14 (5) effective interagency coordination;

15 (6) the potential effects of an electromagnetic
16 pulse or geomagnetic disturbance on NOAA Weather
17 Radio; and

18 (7) any other function the Administrator deems
19 necessary.

1 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 \$40,000,000 to remain available until expended.

Passed the House of Representatives May 11, 2022.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk.