

Planning and Controlling ALERT AM® Broadcasts



The ALERT AM® System's IP.8 Digital Message Recorder has a capacity for creating and organizing 250 messages in 20 different playlists. In a voice-prompt programming environment by cellphone or telephone, you tell the system exactly what you want your broadcasts to say and when to say it. With ALERT AM, a variety of playlist-triggering methods are possible: toggle switch, wireless siren, alarm, pager, encoded NOAA alerts and system default programming. This much flexibility (and potential) can, at first, seem daunting, when you try to plan broadcasts. Below is "organizing logic" to get you started thinking about possibilities for broadcast control. Ultimately, you will want to tailor the programming to your own application, based on triggering methods available to you and the types of emergencies you might encounter. Find tips below under:

- 1 "Summary Guidelines" for creating messages and playlists.
- 2 "Broadcast Planning Chart" for organizing priorities, playlists and activation methods.
- 3 "Detailed Instructions" for following your plan through.

Summary Guidelines

- **Create anticipated emergency scenarios by categorizing into a few groups the types of emergencies you think will most likely occur in your area**, *e.g.*, chemical spill, tornado.
- **Create playlists of recordings, as described below, for each of those anticipated emergency scenarios.** Some playlists may require only a single message and your station's identification. Others may require playing more than one recording in sequence. Two playlist slots will remain open for unforeseen circumstances: live recording and Playlist 2.
- **Record single-purpose messages for these topic-oriented playlists.** Each message should have a unique identification number to assign in playlists for anticipated emergency scenarios. If you place a message in more than one playlist, you only have to update it once to change it in all. To update or change a message, simply record using the same message number; *i.e.*, replace existing messages with updated messages by recording over them. Message 1, for example, could be your station identification (4-letter call sign, number and the operating agency's name), which, according to Federal Communications Commission rules, must be broadcasted every half hour, *i.e.*, Message 1 will go in every playlist.
- **Establish playlists according to their urgency.** Playlists with lower numbers override those with higher numbers; for example, Playlist 6 overrides 7 and 8. "Live" broadcasting overrides all playlists. Playlist 2 overrides all other playlists; it should probably be reserved for unforeseen situations in which you might need to quickly create recordings.
- **Keep a Broadcast Reference Log with message numbers and playlist arrangements.** You might want this reference log to be digital (*e.g.*, MSWord document) for easy searching and updating. You might also want to print it to use away from the office to record new emergency broadcasts or to use if the digital version becomes inaccessible during power outages. System voice prompts and playbacks offer a measure of broadcast control as well.

Broadcast Planning Chart

This chart can serve as a template for helping you organize priorities, playlists and activation methods. Although the content in the columns can vary, the illustrations highlighted in yellow denote standard programming choices. The information that follows the chart explains control methods and organizing logic for planning broadcasts in more depth.

Broadcast Priority Rankings	Broadcast Name Examples	Triggering Control and Emergency Scenario Examples
Control Input 1	Live Cut-In Overrides Playlists 2-8	On-Site Toggle Switch Activation Urgent Unforeseen Circumstance, e.g., Terrorist Attack
Control Input 2	Playlist 2 Emergency Override Playlist	Command-Driven Cell or Telephone Activation Unforeseen Circumstance for which Specific, Newly Recorded Messages are Needed
Control Input 3	Playlist 3	Wireless Siren System Control Automatic Activation or Alarm Activation (With Dry-Contact Pair) Tornado or Fire
Control Input 4	Playlist 4	Toggle Switch Activation (Often Used to Quickly Change Playlists) Traffic Update
Control Input 5	Playlist 5	Pager Control Activation Rescue Operation
Control Input 6	Playlist 6 Encoded for the Alerts and Counties You Target; Can Be Used in Conjunction with Your Introductory Recordings	Automatic NOAA Emergency Alert System/Weather Radio Activation Approaching Hurricane or AMBER Alert for Child Abduction
Control Input 7	Playlist 7 Special Events	Toggle Switch Activation Town Celebration, Road Construction
Control Input 8	Playlist 8 General Playlist	Program Default Non-Emergency Info, e.g., Tourist Info, Community Bulletin, Emergency Preparedness Training

Detailed Instructions

The IP.8 Digital Message Recorder can be controlled remotely by telephone dial-up or locally by a phone plugged directly into the unit. Twenty playlists and 250 message numbers are available for recording within the system. Most playlists consist of just a few messages. Eight control inputs can be triggered variously by external devices to change playlists. Whether a playlist broadcasts depends on where it sits in the broadcast priority ranking. Control Input 8 and Playlist 8 have the lowest priority. Most often they are used as the default broadcast, during non-emergency times, to convey visitor/community information. Playlist 2 — the Emergency Override Playlist — has the second-highest priority after live cut-ins. Operators can trigger it via toggle switch. Emergency Alert System and National Weather Service alerts from NOAA trigger Playlist 6. Playlists 3, 4, 5 and 7 can be triggered a number of different ways, reflected in the Broadcast Planning Chart.

Control Input 1: Live Cut-In

Highest Priority

Selecting this function causes all other programming functions to cease, while the closure is maintained. Live programming always takes precedence over recorded programming, including automatic NOAA EAS/Weather Radio alerts.

Making the closure between Control Input 1 and the “C” contact will open a live channel from the microphone or an outside audio feed from a telephone coupler or sound system, as long as the closure is maintained. The required closure may be provided by a toggle switch on your EOC control console or by a telephone coupler on a special “live-only” telephone line installed in the ALERT AM cabinet.

Programming

Enter * 10 # and set to 1 # for MICROPHONE to cause the microphone to be live. The microphone must be plugged into the mic jack on the rear of the programmer. Enter * 10 # and set to 2 # for AUX to make an audio feed live. The input audio must appear on the AUX terminals at the rear of the programmer.

Control Input 2: Emergency Override

Second Highest Priority

Selecting this function overrides all other recorded playlists, while the closure is maintained.

Reserve for the most critical recorded messages. A closure between Control Input 2 and the “C” contact will cause Playlist 2 to broadcast. Entering the necessary code controls this closure either remotely or locally.

Programming

Enter * 1 # to record the emergency message. Create the Emergency Override Playlist by entering * 41 # 2 # Emergency Message Number # Call Sign Message Number #. Enter * 62 # 2009 # to broadcast Playlist 2. Enter * 62 # 2008 # to take Playlist 2 off the air.

Control Inputs 3, 4, 5 and 7: External Control Contacts

Priority

Playlist 3, 4 and 5 take priority over 6, 7 and 8.

Making the closure between Control Inputs 3, 4, 5, 7 and the “C” contact will cause the playlist of the same number to be immediately on the air, while the closure is maintained. Set up Playlists 3, 4, 5 or 7 to be triggered by the siren system, alarm closure or pushbutton such that the content of the playlist correlates specifically to the condition existing, when it is triggered. For example, if

Control Input 3 is to be used in the event of a tornado warning, the messages on Playlist 3 should be about tornado precautions, and the siren system tone receiver or pushbutton closure should ground the contact only when a tornado warning is issued.

Programming

Press * 41 # to enter the playlist-creation mode. Enter 3 #, 4 #, 5# or 7 # to select the playlist you will create. Next, enter the correlating message numbers you want.

Control Input 6: NOAA EAS/Weather Radio Alert Playlist

Priority

Interrupts Playlists 7 and 8.

When the NOAA Emergency Alert System/National Weather Service receiver in the ALERT AM cabinet receives type of alerts you pre-specify (most emergency managers request all alerts) for a county you have designated (programmed into the system). This contact is triggered automatically, and Playlist 6 is put on the air. On this playlist should be the station ID, slots for specific emergency messages and, of course, the EAS/weather audio message.

Programming

Press * 41 # to enter the playlist-creation mode. Enter 6 # to select Playlist 6. Next, enter 10,000 + the amount of time in seconds that you wish the EAS/weather alert to broadcast, followed by any specific messages relating to the alert. In Example * 41 # 6 # 1 # 10600 #, Playlist 6 would play Message 1, followed by 600 seconds of alert, then repeat.

Control Input 8: General Playlist

Priority

General Playlist 8 will broadcast ONLY if all other inputs are not being used. This is your non-emergency playlist.

This is the default playlist that will be on the air during times when watches, warnings and emergencies are not occurring. This playlist typically contains community information, such as, upcoming events, traffic/construction information, general public information.

Programming

Press * 41 # 8 #. Then, enter the message numbers that correspond to that playlist. Use Playlist 8 to hold other playlists. This provides versatility and ease when making changes to your general non-emergency content. You can create Playlists 9, 10, 11, 12 . . . 20 and enter into Playlist 8 the one(s) specific to your situation/needs. For example: Use Playlist 9 within Playlist 8 to inform motorists of parking for an upcoming event. Entering * 41 # 9 # MessageNumber [e.g., 90] # MessageNumber [e.g., 91] # MessageNumber [e.g., 92] creates Playlist 9 with Messages 90, 91, 92. Entering * 41 # 8 # 1009 places Playlist 9 inside Playlist 8. Change the content of Playlist 8 by swapping Playlist 9 with 10, 11, 12 . . . 20 [e.g., *41 # 8 # 1010 # places Playlist 10 in Playlist 8.]



Information Station Specialists, Inc.

PO Box 51 • 3368 88th Avenue • Zeeland, MI 49464-0051

Phone 616.772.2300 • Fax 616.772.2966 • After 5 PM Eastern Time 616.772.2300 (Press 7)

Email ISS@theRADIOsource.com • Web www.theRADIOsource.com

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