

ABSTRACT
WILLIAM CLIFTON NELSON: American Warning Dissemination and
NOAA Weather Radio
(Under the direction of Ferrel Guillory)

The predominant American arrangement for disseminating hazard warnings is one of public-private partnership. Government agencies originate official warnings, but commercial media provide the primary means of getting word out to people.

Distinctively, the government's Weather Radio network is an all-public medium, broadcasting warnings directly to citizens, freeing them of any subscription dependency, and eliminating corporate involvement in the dissemination chain. Weather Radio offers an alert feature, allowing receivers to stand silent until an alarm is sent by officials to announce bulletins. This combination of public ownership, free access, and alarm capability places Weather Radio in a public-service class by itself, permitting the Weather Service, *autonomously*, to fulfill a basic, core purpose and function of government: warning citizens against surprise disaster.

This paper traces the history of American warning dissemination, and of the Weather Radio network, and examines the network's strengths, limitations, and possible future uses post-9/11.