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EBS interruptions annoy, but save lives

By Charles Lieurance
Senior Editor

Usually that shrill warning that emanates from your TV screen during the most exciting portions of once-in-a-lifetime TV spectaculars or during your favorite songs on the radio is "only a test," but the message it conveys was meant to be more than just an annoyance.

"The Emergency Broadcast System was meant to be a lifesaver," said Rick Semm, a spokesman for Nebraska Civil Defense. "Nebraska's plan is one of the most comprehensive in the nation."

According to Semm, the Emergency Broadcast System was implemented in the 1950s during the height of the cold war and intense paranoia about nuclear attack. At the same time "duck and cover" films were instructing a generation of kids to hide under their desks during the first molten seconds of a nuclear war, the EBS promised people a quick, effective

warning system that would allow them to find more substantial cover in fallout shelters.

"Each state has a different plan," Semm said. "Nebraska has recently upgraded their plan, raising the coverage for EBS to 100 percent."

Semm said that EBS can reach everyone in the state in a matter of about 10 minutes.

Nebraska ETV, the main TV station that is monitored for the EBS warning signal, covers the entire state by virtue of its many transmitters, he said.

"ETV is the primary warning point for Nebraska," Semm said. "And it carries the signal across the state, making this one of the few states that can boast of complete coverage in the event of an emergency."

Obviously the EBS has not been used yet for its designed purpose, as a warning of nuclear holocaust, but Semm said that it has not gone to waste.

"It can be used for floods, storms,

hazardous waste spillages and such," he said. "It has never been used on a statewide level, but, for instance, if the dam at Lake McConaughy broke because of a heavy storm the whole state would have to be warned quickly."

For most storms though, Semm said, an emergency news release to various TV and radio stations is enough and the EBS is not required.

"Locally, the system is used all the time," he said, "for tornado warnings and major storms."

The EBS does two tests per year statewide, Semm said. One is done in the fall and another in the spring. Both tests are unannounced. The State Civil Agency initiates a notice of activation for these tests and the stations have a choice to either broadcast the warning live or record and delay the warning and air it at another time, he said.

Lyle Kroftman, the head engineer at Lincoln TV station KOLN said they run their tests on a weekly basis.

The tests are organized by KFOR radio station under the supervision of Roger Larson.

"The only cost for a station who runs EBS tests is in production," Kroftman said. "But you make one spot for the warning and it runs for years, so that cost is very minimal."

Kroftman said frequent tests have made the system run quite smoothly for many years.

"The tests are purely voluntary," Semm said. "The FCC just requires that the station be equipped to play the warning."

The stations are also given the option of running their own tests, and, in the event of an emergency the voice of the State Adjutant General for Civil Defense, Major General Stanley Heng, can be replaced by the voice of someone at one of the stations.

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'Living legend' blues artist Guy to play at Zoo

By Ken Havlat
Staff Reporter

Tonight at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St., living legend Buddy Guy, "master of the stratocaster," will be making another of his memorable appearances.

A veteran of the Chicago blues scene since the '50s, Guy has recorded over 25 albums. In that time he has developed a large following by taking his sweetly expressive guitar on the road, eschewing the feeling of the blues to the eager throngs. His work, especially with harpist Junior Wells, has brought accolades from various renowned guitarists, including Eric Clapton who has called Guy "the best blues guitarist alive."

Guy's style is that of floating texture. It mends well to the sides of the wall before flowing gently into the ears. It is a rare opportunity to see many of the Blues principles stars since the blues revival of the mid-'80s have priced them out of the smaller clubs' market.

For diehard blues fans interested in Guy's earlier period, MCA recently re-released several of his early Chess Records albums on their Chess Masters label, with more scheduled for release soon.

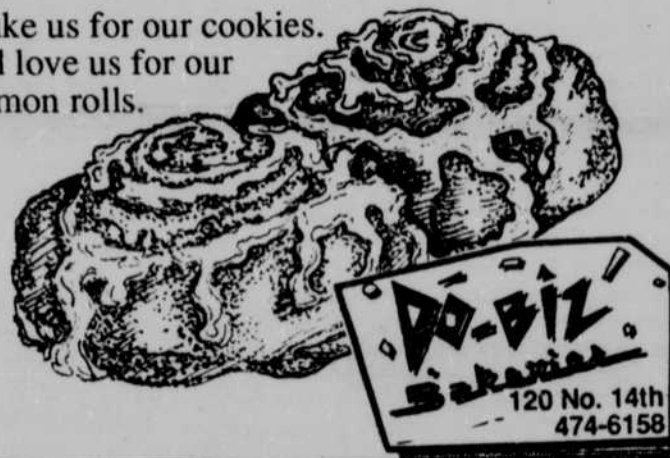
Cover tonight is \$8 with a starting time of 9 p.m.

Coming to the Zoo July 6-9 is Mark Hummel and the Blues Survivors, a four-piece outfit from San Francisco.

Cover for these shows is \$3.

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