

**Remarks of FCC Chairman Kevin J. Martin  
to the Satellite Industry Association's Satellite Leadership Dinner**  
February, 6, 2006  
*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you Joslyn. And thank you to the Satellite Industry Association for this opportunity to address you tonight.

And congratulations to Chairman Stevens on his receipt of your leadership award this year. He has been a leader on behalf the industry, and we all benefit from his knowledge and years of invaluable experience with the communications sector.

Earlier tonight, Chairman Stevens recognized that you are a vital piece of our nation's sophisticated communications network. The Commission also recognizes the important role you play. And while you provide key video, voice, and data communications services to America's consumers, tonight I want to specifically address satellites' role as an essential component of this country's public safety and homeland security operations.

During the recovery efforts following the 9/11 attacks and last year's unusually deadly hurricane season, satellite providers proved that the service's ubiquity is essential in times of emergency. I want to applaud you for your tremendous efforts during these times of crisis.

In particular, I want to thank you for hard work and compassion in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. I understand that you donated equipment to emergency responders, increased capacity (some of which you gave away for free), shared valuable spectrum amongst yourselves, established dedicated DBS channels for evacuees in the hopes they might locate lost loved ones, and donated TV services to shelters so evacuees might watch the news or their beloved New Orleans Saints.

It was through these efforts that your commitment to addressing the needs of first responders and other public safety officials became apparent to the rest of America.

As you know, the devastation to the communications infrastructure wrought by the storms was extraordinary. As a result, it was extremely difficult for hundreds of thousands of people to receive news and emergency information and to communicate with their loved ones. It is at times like these that we are reminded of the importance of being able to communicate. While no communications network could be expected to remain fully operational in the face of direct hits from category four or five hurricanes, that fact was little consolation to the people on the ground.

I visited the area after the storms and saw the extraordinary obstacles faced by local officials. Flooding, lack of power, scarce fuel resources, and an overall lack of security all hampered the ability to restore communications. Satellite service providers helped to bridge many of the communications gaps left by these outages.

FEMA, the National Guard, the Red Cross, state and local first responders, and even local phone companies all turned to the satellite industry for restoration and essential communications. You provided satellite phones and video links to law enforcement officers, and medical personnel.

You provided emergency relief personnel with phones that proved invaluable in establishing interoperable connections among first responders and other communications networks.

Hurricane Katrina reminded us that a truly interoperable network must function in all areas served by emergency response providers, including where communications infrastructure is degraded or non-existent. Satellites can contribute to a robust, interoperable network for emergency responders by providing ubiquitous, reliable coverage throughout the United States.

In some emergency environments, satellites may be the only communications facilities accessible. Incorporation of commercial satellite services into an interoperable public safety system will ensure that emergency responders can coordinate their efforts in providing effective aid in times of need.

The instant infrastructure so many of you in the satellite industry provided was also a lifeline for families trying to stay connected and businesses trying to provide services to stricken communities. Satellite services allowed those who were safely outside the impact zones in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi to receive television and radio broadcasts from the storms' centers. Satellite services were an essential part of providing this nation with the live information we needed to understand the magnitude of these disasters.

The Commission has recognized the unique and critical role satellites played in the relief and recovery efforts following the hurricanes. We have invited two satellite companies to participate in the FCC's independent panel reviewing the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the nation's telecommunications infrastructure.

The independent panel met for the first time last week, and it intends to deliver its report and recommendations to the Commission in June. I am confident that this comprehensive forum of public safety officials and communications providers will help us learn from this terrible experience so that we will be even better prepared when the next crisis strikes. The work of this panel will also contribute to the Commission's public safety and homeland security planning activities. I look forward to hearing from the panel, and I appreciate their service.

So, as the work of rebuilding what has been lost continues, we must also more broadly focus on increasing our support of public safety and emergency response personnel overall. As Chairman, I have made it a Commission priority to support public safety wherever and whenever possible, and satellite services are no exception. You have played an important role in your support of public safety to date, and I will ask your continued cooperation and ingenuity on this issue going forward.

In addition to the need for ubiquitous voice communications, last year's hurricane season also emphasized the need for a comprehensive, robust emergency alert system. Such a system would enable national, state, and local officials to reach affected citizens efficiently and effectively.

The Commission has recognized that commercial satellite services are well suited for the provision of an emergency alert system. Satellite operators can and must play an important role in current and future incarnations of this system. Satellite participation will help ensure that all television viewers and radio listeners have access to national or regional public alerts and warnings in the event of an emergency.

I applaud SIA's efforts to educate all levels of first responders and public officials on the capabilities and practical application of satellite technology. But I also encourage the industry to develop technologies that will provide public safety officials the means to quickly reach out on a national, regional, state, or local level when critical information must be communicated to the American public.

Recent Commission action permitting more flexible use of commercial satellite spectrum should contribute to the industry's ability to develop interoperable broadband mobile communications and enhanced 911 capabilities. This flexible use will help satellite companies to deploy affordable, "off the shelf" solutions for emergency responders and to provide enhanced 911 service to consumers.

I also recognize that your industry plays an important role in providing commercial communications services. Satellite technology has a daily impact on the lives of businesses and consumers across the nation. Though they may not always realize it, consumers use satellites when they swipe a credit card at a gas station, withdraw cash from an ATM, or watch television.

In my work at the Commission, I see one trend common to all communications sectors: businesses and consumers continue to want – and need – ever-increasing connectivity. Wherever they are, whenever they want.

First responders that protect these businesses and consumers require ever-more reliable and increasingly interoperable communications. And as the spotlight of critical public safety and homeland security services has focused on the satellite sector, the industry has re-shaped its services:

Terminals are smaller and easier to use; Data rates are higher; and Coverage areas are more dynamically defined. I encourage you to continue these efforts to innovate, to integrate, to inter-operate -- and to rethink the ways that this unique sector can remain relevant, reliable, and innovative.

For our part at the FCC, my colleagues and I are doing all that we can to help in meeting this challenge:

I believe that it is the Commission's responsibility to ensure technological and competitive neutrality in competitive communications markets, including the satellite communications markets.

We need to continue to promote harmonized spectrum allocations internationally.

We should also avoid creating unnecessary burdens on U.S. operators who conduct their business globally. In that vein, we are working hard to ensure the United States Delegation accomplishes its goals at the next World Radio Conference in 2007.

In closing, I want to tell you that I am proud of the good-faith collaboration between industry and Commission staff during our collective efforts in the aftermath of last year's hurricanes. I hope we can build upon that experience to enhance the contribution of the satellite industry in serving the needs of first responders and American consumers going forward. There is much work left to do, and I look forward to continuing our spirited dialogue on what should come next.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak with you tonight. Good night.