Remarks of
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
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(as prepared)

Mere words can never fully express the emotions we feel or describe the images we see in our mind's eye when we reflect on the horrific attacks against our country on September 11, 2001. The events of that day five years ago left none of us untouched. Being here in Boston, I am reminded that the two hijacked airplanes that crashed into the World Trade Center towers departed from this beautiful and historic city.

While we continue to mourn the innocent lives lost and honor the brave and selfless acts of the first responders, we must also learn from our experience and equip the nation to function more effectively in such times of crisis. At the Federal Communications Commission, my colleagues and I are keenly aware of how important all communications technologies are when public safety or homeland security concerns become paramount.

Earlier this year, at the second meeting of the FCC Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks in Mississippi, I heard personal accounts of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. The one clear message I heard was the need for redundancy in communications networks. I applaud the collaborative efforts and contributions of the entire communications industry, which has worked hard to address the difficult policy and technical issues that make these necessary improvements possible.

As many of you know, the Commission will soon unveil its new Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to streamline functions at the FCC. This action underscores the fact that the dissemination of vital information and interoperable communications at every level are our first line of defense against natural disasters, attacks on our homeland, and even the possibility of a pandemic, other health-related, or environmental attack.