

Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate

OPENING REMARKS

**Federal Communications Commission
Summit on
Communications Network Surge Management in Emergencies**

September 25, 2007

Good morning everyone. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to welcome you to the FCC this morning. I want to extend personal thanks to staff of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for their efforts in making today happen, and of course, to Derek Poarch, our first Chief of this historic Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau.

Public safety and homeland security is perhaps the Commission's most important area of authority. One of my personal goals as a Commissioner has been to support and advance initiatives that further strengthen and enhance the security and reliability of the nation's communications infrastructure and public safety and emergency response capabilities in the event of a natural disaster, pandemic, or terrorist attack. We must be prepared for the known, as well as the unknown.

This new bureau plays many important roles, including bringing together the tremendous and committed individuals here today. Many of you are the first to assist in emergencies. Others here build and operate networks, without which public safety and homeland security cannot be ensured.

These topic specific forums provide all of us an opportunity to work together and prepare together, which not only leads to good policy but ensures that the first time you all meet each other isn't in the middle of an emergency or disaster!

The focus of today's summit is how to manage surges in wireless calls during emergencies. Our increasingly mobile society means mobile subscribers may be the first to see and report accidents, crimes, terrorist threats, or any other emergency. Incredibly, mobile phones are used to make over a quarter of a million 911 calls every day.

The operation of wireless networks is, therefore, of utmost importance. Because, in moments of crisis, the performance of your networks is crucial because they become a "lifeline." The industry has learned a lot from extraordinary events like September 11, the recent campus tragedies at Virginia Tech and the University of Delaware and the bridge collapse in Minnesota, remind us just how important it is for emergency officials and worried family members' calls to get through.

Your companies are truly making a difference as the 9-1-1 system is the connection between the "eyes and ears" of the public and the emergency response system in the U.S.; making 9-1-1 a very significant homeland security asset.

However, technology alone is not enough- the backbone of our defense simply doesn't exist in the absence of forward thinking management of these

networks. Technology needs real people in real places- like all of you- to make it work to help save lives and property, and to defend our nation.

That's why I just wanted to come by and say thank you to you - who are the experts. We need your "street smarts," your technical expertise, and your common sense approach. Thank you. Have a good and productive meeting.