



# NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.  
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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## FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI RELEASES REPORT ON COMMISSION'S PREPAREDNESS FOR A MAJOR PUBLIC EMERGENCY

Washington, D.C. -- Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski today released a comprehensive report on the Commission's ability to respond to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, public health emergencies, and other large-scale events. The report, entitled *FCC's Preparedness for a Major Public Emergency* and prepared by the Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, is in response to the 30-day, top-to-bottom state-of-readiness review launched by Chairman Genachowski as one of his first actions at the agency.

"The FCC has an important role to play in ensuring that our nation's communications infrastructure serves our public safety needs," Chairman Genachowski said. "The Public Safety Bureau's thorough review concluded that the agency is ready to respond to emergencies, but there is more work to do to maximize the agency's readiness. The public safety challenges we face are ongoing, dynamic, and growing. Today's report outlines concrete steps the FCC can and will take to better support public safety communications and protect our nation."

Rear Admiral (ret) Jamie Barnett, Chief of the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, who led the review, said, "Our number one priority is making sure that the FCC has the capability to respond immediately to a disaster or emergency. As this report confirms, preparation will take training, resources, and constant vigilance. I look forward to working with Chairman Genachowski, the other FCC Commissioners and the entire agency, as well as our federal, state, and local partners, to implement additional initiatives that will further strengthen our emergency preparedness and response capabilities."

This report was released as part of a joint press conference with officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

"Improving emergency communications across the country is a priority for DHS," said Chris Essid, Director of the Office of Emergency Communications at DHS. "This report will help strengthen coordination efforts among emergency communications practitioners nationwide and guide our state, local, and tribal partners to invest in the right capabilities."

Kevin Yeskey, M.D., Deputy Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, HHS, said, “Communications is critical in supporting the public health and medical needs of a community in preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters and emergencies, including pandemics. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the FCC to further strengthen our nation's preparedness for public health and all emergencies.”

During emergencies, the FCC’s primary mission is to ensure that essential communications networks and services are operable, reliable, and quickly restored when necessary so that the American public can communicate and receive emergency information. Equally important is the FCC’s responsibility to ensure that America’s public safety officials and first responders have the tools they need to protect lives, property, and strategic infrastructure.

The report concludes that the Commission is prepared to respond to communications emergencies and perform its mission. The report also identifies a number of areas in which the FCC can improve its emergency planning and response: education and training, outreach and collaboration, emergency operations and alerts, and network analysis. The initiatives highlighted below have been completed, are underway, or will be launched in the near future.

### **Outreach and Collaboration**

The report emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong partnerships with federal, state, tribal and local governments, and the public safety community to ensure effective coordination when disaster strikes. The FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) is taking steps to enhance outreach efforts with federal partners, state and local emergency managers, 911 call centers, hospitals, and communications providers, particularly in the U.S. Gulf Coast region in preparation for the 2009 hurricane season.

- **Enhanced Coordination with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** The FCC and FEMA have established new working groups to improve coordination on national emergency communications planning and response.
- **Enhanced Coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):** The FCC and HHS are working together to define emergency communications requirements of public health care facilities and establish emergency procedures to improve support.
- **Senior Emergency Outreach Coordinator:** The FCC will initiate a pilot program this month in which the agency will send a senior emergency outreach coordinator to the Gulf Coast region whose primary role will be to provide support for state and local emergency managers.

### **Emergency Operations and Alerts**

The report recommends ways to ensure that, during emergencies, the FCC is able to maintain operations, respond proactively to public safety communications needs, and communicate accurate and timely information to the public. In addition to updating its emergency operations plans, the FCC is working to improve its rapid-notification capabilities via software upgrades and website alerts.

- **FCC Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Pandemic Plans:** The FCC has updated and improved its COOP and Pandemic plans – two distinct and important needs – with the latter especially timely in light of expectations for a serious H1N1 outbreak during the upcoming flu season. Pandemic preparation places emphasis on social distancing, telework and risk management activities to reduce the spread of illness. Other types of disasters will require sheltering and meeting in alternative sites to ensure ongoing operations.
- **Emergency Standard Operating Procedures:** The FCC is reviewing and revising, where appropriate, all emergency standard operating procedures for the FCC’s 24/7 operations center.
- **Emergency Outreach Notification:** The FCC is procuring an IT-based rapid-notification system that will enable the Commission to effectively reach out to the public safety community and FCC emergency responders during major disasters.
- **Emergency Communications Website:** The FCC is providing additional resources to improving its emergency website, including alert information and situational updates.
- **Emergency Alert System:** The FCC is working with its federal partners to identify improvements to the national emergency alert system, accounting for next-generation technologies.

### **Network Analysis**

The report identifies a number of initiatives to help enable rapid detection of public safety and homeland security challenges that could impact or compromise communications networks. The FCC will collaborate with federal partners and network providers to identify potential threats, such as cyber attacks. The FCC will also continue ongoing efforts to ensure that broadband technologies and next-generation applications are available to the public safety community.

- **Cyber Security:** The FCC has established a cyber security working group that is charged with assessing the FCC’s responsibilities, needs, and assets in the cyber security field.
- **Project Roll Call:** The FCC is acquiring additional spectrum analysis equipment to enable field operations staff to rapidly determine which public safety communications systems require assistance during emergencies. Project Roll Call is an example of a FEMA-FCC partnership success.
- **FCC’s Communications Security, Reliability and Interoperability Council (CSRIC):** The FCC is establishing an advisory council that will be charged with examining a variety of potential improvements for emergency communications, including 9-1-1, Emergency Alert System, and industry best practices.

### **Education and Training**

The report outlines training programs and drills to equip FCC staff with the skills, tools, and information they need to respond to any emergency. This training will inform staff of their collective and individual roles during crisis situations. Staff will also learn about management software systems that provide accurate and timely information in emergencies.

- **Emergency Readiness Training:** Chairman Genachowski led a successful table-top exercise on continuity of operations on August 19, 2009. The three-hour training included Commissioners or their representatives and all senior FCC officials or their representatives. The FCC is also revamping its emergency readiness training for all employees.
- **FCC Field Leadership Training on Emergency Preparedness:** The FCC is preparing a training program and exercise to ensure key field personnel understand their roles and responsibilities in the event that FCC headquarters leadership are unavailable due to a catastrophic emergency.
- **IT-based Emergency Response Training:** The FCC is providing resources to train staff on emergency incident management software systems that provide the Commission with accurate, up-to-date information about large-scale-events.
- **FCC Employee Shelter-in-Place Training:** The FCC is preparing training programs to help all employees understand what is expected of them during a crisis.

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