

**Prepared Remarks of  
Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission  
Public Safety Press Conference:  
FCC's Preparedness for a Major Public Emergency  
September 8, 2009**

Good morning. I'd like to thank everybody for coming. In particular, I want to thank Craig Fugate, Administrator of FEMA, Chris Essid, Director of the DHS Office of Emergency Communications and Dr. Kevin Yeskey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at HHS. I know first thing in the morning the day after a holiday may not be ideal timing. But as the theme of today's event reminds us, timing isn't always our option – no telling when duty may call.

While the timing of this event may not be ideal, it is certainly appropriate. This is a sobering week in our country's history. We mark the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the horrific attacks of 9/11, which forever changed the way we think about emergency preparedness. We also just marked the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which revealed that still more work needed to be done. But you don't need to look back to understand the importance of our government's emergency preparedness and communications. Just look at the paper. In recent weeks, California has been ravaged by forest fires. And we face the possibility of an H1N1 pandemic that could affect virtually every aspect of our lives and test many of our communications systems.

We all bring our own experiences to these issues. They are certainly not abstract for me. Like many others, I was in Manhattan not far from the World Trade Center on 9/11, and family members were even closer to Ground Zero. And this might surprise some of you, but earlier in my life I worked as a certified EMT on an ambulance further north in Manhattan; and also taught CPR. These experiences underscored for me the real threats and dangers we face; they left me humbled by the incredibly challenging and vitally important work our first responders do every day; and they made crystal clear to me the importance of communications in times of crisis. They are part of the reason that public safety is one of my top priorities.

One thing we have learned from past emergencies is that an effective response requires effective communications, as well as strong collaboration with the public safety community, our federal, state, tribal and local partners, and the communications industry. The FCC has an important role to play in responding to public safety emergencies, and in helping ensure that our communications infrastructure serves its critical role in times of crisis. The FCC's mission during a public emergency is to ensure continuous operations and reconstitution of critical communications systems and services.

In short, the FCC has essential work to do to make sure that communications are part of the solution, not the problem. The Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau leads that effort – but it is agency-wide, with important roles played by the Office of Managing Director, our Enforcement Bureau and in fact every bureau and office at the agency.

Two of my earliest actions as FCC Chairman centered on public safety. First, on my first full day in the job, I directed the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to conduct a 30-day, top-to-bottom review of the agency's state of readiness. Second, I enlisted Admiral Jamie Barnett to lead the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau and the review. Admiral Barnett brings to the FCC 32 years of distinguished leadership and service in the Navy, and he understands deeply the importance of collaboration, preparation and foresight in emergency response.

Today, I am pleased to release the report on the findings of our Bureau's Public Safety review. Admiral Barnett will discuss the details, but I want to outline briefly the four key areas for improvement highlighted by the Public Safety Bureau's report.

The first is outreach and collaboration. The report emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong partnerships with federal, state, and local governments, the public safety community, and providers of communications services. This outreach is important to identify in advance the communications needs of key stakeholders like hospitals and other strategic institutions. I'm pleased to report the FCC has recently created new working groups with both FEMA and HHS.

The second is emergency operations and alerts. The Public Safety Bureau's 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. These efforts will help maintain continuity of operations and make sure citizens and first responders can get the alerts they need, when they need them.

The third is network analysis. In addition to helping ensure that our first responders have the communications tools they need, the FCC has an important role to play in preserving the security of our communications networks. We have launched a new project with FEMA to rapidly determine which public safety communications systems require immediate assistance during emergencies. We have also created a new working group that will focus on ways to strengthen our efforts on cybersecurity, one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation.

And finally, education and training. It's one thing to have an emergency response plan, but it's meaningless if you can't execute it. The Public Safety Bureau report contains a number of recommendations for improving the FCC's ongoing education and training programs to help ensure effective execution by agency personnel of the roles they play in times of crisis.

Overall, while confirming that the FCC is ready to respond to communications emergencies, the report also reminds us that the agency must work every day in a changing world to maximize its readiness, to ensure that the agency is prepared to meet its vital mission in the digital age, and to work toward helping our country's first responders deploy 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies in the essential work they do. In some cases this may require updating and investing in resources and expertise at the agency. This is something Admiral Barnett has already started working on.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to commend Admiral Barnett, his team, and all the people at the FCC who have worked on this report. In particular, I wanted to recognize the Public Safety Bureau staff who burned the midnight oil, including: Ken Moran, Joe Casey, Allan Manuel, Jane Kelly, Ken Burnley, Todd Mitchell, and Trey Forgety. Thank you very much for your hard and excellent work.