

Chairman Genachowski's Press Conference  
Release of Public Safety Report and Action Plan on Emergency  
Preparedness and Response

*The FCC's State-of-Readiness*

Remarks by Rear Admiral (ret.) James Arden Barnett, Jr.  
Chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau  
Federal Communications Commission

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Thank you Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your leadership and emphasis on public safety and emergency preparedness and the support of all our Commissioners and FCC leaders in this process. Certainly, the wildfires in California have provided us with a stark reminder of how important communications are for America's first responders and state and local emergency managers on a daily basis.

I have not been here long, but I learned right away that the people of FCC have a deep understanding of what communications mean in an emergency: saved lives, saved homes, saved jobs, faster recovery. From that deep understanding comes a commitment and a dedication to doing our utmost to be ready for emergencies and incidents that may face our Nation. If you have ever spoken to a firefighter or a law enforcement officer, you know the intensity with which first responders talk about their work. It is with that same intensity that we undertook this study.

The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau led this 30-day review, but the entire agency worked on it. In addition to PSHSB, the Enforcement Bureau and the Office of the Managing Director exerted significant time and effort to make sure we had a clear vision of readiness. The Chairman, as one of his first acts, asked

us some piercing questions: How are we organized, what are our roles, how are we trained, how have we exercised our capabilities, what have we learned from the exercises and what have we done about it, how have we handled real world events, what are we doing to prevent communications failures, what is our role in cybersecurity and are we ready for a pandemic. Looking at emergencies that may confront any part of the nation, and those that may affect the FCC directly, in essence, the Chairman was asking, “Are you ready?”

Based on this comprehensive review, I would say that we are ready for emergencies that we can anticipate and that we are reasonably prepared for those which cannot be anticipated.

However, the review did identify things that we can and should do better, and it spurred some innovative thinking about things we haven't done before. The remainder of my remarks will be about what actions have been recommended, and that Chairman Genachowski has ordered, to put the FCC in a better posture for emergency preparedness. We have grouped these initiatives into 4 categories, the first one of which is:

Outreach: Establishing strong relationships with federal, state, and local governments, and the public safety community to ensure effective coordination when disaster strikes.

The FCC mission, in an emergency, is to ensure continuous operations and restoration of critical communications systems and services, the large majority of which are owned privately, but are of primary importance to public safety, security and well-being. We are not first responders, but we support first responders. We don't own communications systems, but we support reliability and restoration of communications. We are first supporters of first responders.

The FCC is most effective when we are working integrally with our federal partners and our state, tribal and local partners.

We have strengthened our collaboration with FEMA, with the DHS Office of Emergency Communications and the National Communications System (NCS) as a result of this review and are in the process of creating a high-level working group to find ways to improve effectiveness and efficiency in emergency response.

This effort will include alerting systems and also credentialing private sector communications crews to provide them with ready-access to disaster areas. The entire Commission has initiated a comprehensive review of their emergency contact lists for federal, state and local partners, the public safety community, industry leaders and advocates to ensure they are complete, up-to-date and accurate.

- **Enhanced Coordination with FEMA** – FCC and FEMA have established new working groups to improve coordination on national emergency communications planning and response.
- **Enhanced Coordination with HHS** – FCC and HHS are working together to define emergency communications requirements of public health and health care facilities and to establish emergency procedures to improve support. We have further strengthened our coordination with HHS by establishing an on-going dialog related to emergency preparedness and response. These discussions focus on the respective agencies' outreach programs and Operations Center activities as part of the overall effort to assist hospitals, emergency medical services, and local communities during public-health emergencies.
- **Outreach Coordinator** – FCC will initiate a pilot program this month in which we will send a senior emergency coordinator to the Gulf Coast region whose primary role will be to provide outreach, support, and liaison to state and local emergency managers.

The coordinator will be available for immediate deployment in major emergencies with the advantage of previously established working relationships, supplementing the outstanding Enforcement Bureau agents who serve so well in

emergencies. In the spirit of cooperation with state, tribal and local officials, later this month a new Emergency Operations Outreach Coordinator will be deployed to the Gulf Coast region to supplement and reinforce the FCC's Enforcement Bureau (EB's) field offices and the significant work that they perform in emergency response.

OPERATION ROLL CALL—another FEMA/FCC success story arising out of Katrina

The second category is:

Education and Training: Ensuring FCC staff are fully prepared and equipped with the tools they need to handle any emergency.

- **Emergency Readiness Training** – FCC Chairman led a successful table top exercise on Continuity of Operations on August 19. It lasted three hours and included Commissioners or their representatives and senior FCC officials. The FCC also is re-vamping its emergency readiness training for all employees.
- **FCC Field Leadership Training on Emergency Preparedness** – FCC is preparing training program and an exercise to ensure key field personnel understand their roles and responsibilities should FCC headquarters leadership

suffer a catastrophic emergency and not be available to perform their responsibilities.

- **IT-based Emergency Response Training** – FCC is providing resources for staff training in the use of emergency incident management software systems that help provide the Commission with accurate, up-to-date information about large-scale-events.
- **FCC Employee Shelter-in-Place Training** – FCC is preparing training programs to help all employees to understand what is expected of them during a crisis.

The Third is:

Emergency Operations and Alerts: Making sure that the FCC is up and running and that the public is receiving timely information during a public emergency.

- **FCC Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Pandemic Plans** – FCC has updated and improved its COOP and Pandemic plans. Preparedness for a pandemic places greater emphasis on social distancing, telework and risk management activities to reduce the spread of illness, which is significantly different from the response in other types of

disasters, where sheltering and meeting in alternative sites for operational activities are viewed as appropriate. I also want to touch on issues related to the current H1N1 influenza pandemic that has had a global impact. As you may know, Federal government estimates (according to DHS) indicate that as much as 40 percent or more of the nation's workforce could be absent from work during a severe influenza pandemic.

We are also working with HHS to identify the critical communications needs of hospitals, emergency medical personnel and public health officials should the need for alternative care sites become a reality in response to the pandemic. This is an extremely important aspect of our collaboration with HHS.

- **Emergency Standard Operating Procedures** -- FCC is reviewing, and revising as appropriate, all emergency standard operating procedures for the 24/7 Watch Office.
- **Emergency Outreach Notification** -- FCC is procuring an IT-based rapid notification system that will enable us to effectively reach out to public safety community and FCC emergency responders during major disasters.



- **Emergency Alert System** -- FCC is working with its Federal partners to identify improvements to the national emergency alert system.
- **Emergency Communications Website** – FCC is providing additional resources to enable it to improve its emergency web-site information during major disasters

The fourth and final is:

Network Analysis: Rapid detection and long-term prevention of public safety communications challenges.

- **Cyber Security** In line with all we are doing to protect the nation's communications infrastructure is the ability to quickly identify attacks that may compromise or disrupt communications networks and services. Recent cyber attacks on government and private-sector networks have exposed the hidden vulnerabilities that we face as a nation.

The Commission will continue to focus on the importance of cyber security with respect to its internal operations and will further examine how it may provide technical expertise to other

federal agencies and the private sector in cases of cyber attack.

To assist in this effort, we've established a Cyber Security Working Group within the Commission to assess the FCC's current cyber security expertise and assets, identify the needs and requirements for cyber security expertise, evaluate the our role in cyber security, identify gaps and vulnerabilities, and develop recommendations to address the deficiencies.

The working group has already met and will provide the Chairman with a report by the end of this year.

- **Project Roll Call** – FCC is acquiring additional spectrum analysis gear 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)** – FCC is establishing its advisory council that will be charged with examining a variety of issues that can improve emergency communications for the public safety community, including 9-1-1, EAS, and industry best practices.

+++++ I would again like to thank the PSHSB team Ken Moran, Joe Casey, Allan Manuel, Jane Kelly, Ken Burnley, Todd Mitchell, and Trey Forgety, Rob Kenny and Jen Howard, and once again, thanks to our federal partners, Dr. Kevin Yeskey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of HHS for Preparedness and Response and Chris Essid, Director of the Office of Emergency Communications at DHS.

Thank you, this concludes my remarks.

I would now like to open the floor for your questions.