

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission**

“Next-Generation 9-1-1”

**Arlington County Emergency Center
Arlington, Virginia
November 23, 2010**

Thank you all for coming out today. I'm glad to see we aren't the only people who haven't taken off yet for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Of course, instead of a time to take off, Thanksgiving and the holiday season is one of the busiest times for our emergency responders. Each Thanksgiving, we see a significant spike in emergency calls to 9-1-1, particularly in response to traffic incidents.

Thanks to the outstanding job of people at 9-1-1 call centers and our first responders, these calls are saving lives.

9-1-1 proves that harnessing the power of communications technology to develop tools that empower individuals can have a material impact on people's lives.

We called this event to talk about some of the important steps we are taking to modernize 9-1-1 for the 21st century.

The current 9-1-1 system is efficient and reliable -- handling more than 650,000 calls a day.

But today's 9-1-1 system doesn't support the communication tools of tomorrow. Many 9-1-1 call centers don't even have broadband, and some are in communities where broadband isn't even available. That is unacceptable.

I mentioned earlier how 650,000 9-1-1 calls are placed every day. Well, 450,000 of those calls are made from mobile phones. With today's advances in commercial mobile broadband technologies, consumers are using their phones less to make calls, and more for texting and sending pictures.

Even though mobile phones are the device of choice for most 9-1-1 callers, and we primarily use our phones to text, right now, you can't text 9-1-1.

Let me reiterate that point. If you find yourself in an emergency situation and want to send a text for help, you can pretty much text anyone EXCEPT a 9-1-1 call center.

The Virginia Tech campus shootings in 2007 are a tragic, real-life reminder of the technological limitations that 9-1-1 is now saddled with. Some students and witnesses tried to text 9-1-1 during that emergency and as we know, those messages never went through and were never received by local 9-1-1 dispatchers.

It's time to bring 9-1-1 into the digital age.

Broadband-enabled, Next-Generation 9-1-1 will revolutionize emergency response by providing increased means of communications -- including texting, data, video, and photo -- which will improve situational awareness and rapid response.

There are tremendous benefits that would come with this capability, particularly for persons with disabilities or those individuals in emergencies who cannot speak to 9-1-1 dispatcher due to circumstances that could further jeopardize their life and safety.

Next-Generation 9-1-1 will allow a caller to transmit a photo of a car leaving the scene of an armed robbery.

Next-Generation 9-1-1 will enable a deaf person to communicate with an emergency call center by sending text messages to the 9-1-1 call taker.

Next-Generation 9-1-1 will enable emergency calls to be placed by devices, rather than human beings. Examples of such devices include environmental sensors capable of detecting chemicals, highway cameras, security cameras, alarms, personal medical devices, and consumer electronics in automobiles.

The National Broadband Plan recommends that the Commission should initiate a new proceeding to ensure that the public has access to broadband technologies to communicate with 9-1-1 dispatchers.

While the need for action is clear, modernizing 9-1-1 raises complex challenges that will take not only time, but also significant coordination. We need to help of our federal, state and local partners, public safety, lawmakers, communications and broadband service providers, and equipment manufacturers to develop a national framework for Next-Generation 9-1-1 services across the nation. FCC staff recognize the importance of this work and what it takes and continue to work diligently with all interested parties to move this initiative forward.

I am pleased to announce that we will initiate a Next-Generation 9-1-1 proceeding next month – taking up an item during the Commission’s December meeting. It is an important first step.

We at FCC are committed to working through these issues. Today, I call on all the key constituencies to work with us, and I expect that this proceeding will provide a vehicle for much-needed coordination and the opportunity to effectively deploy Next-Generation 9-1-1 across America.

These actions will build on the Commission’s recent order to improve 9-1-1 by making location-accuracy requirements more stringent for wireless service providers.

9-1-1 is an indispensable, life-saving tool. Broadband can make it even better.

The technology is there. The biggest question is: will we be able to harness that technology and revolutionize America’s 9-1-1 system?

It is a challenge we are meeting head on. I look forward to working with Congress, our federal, state and local partners, the public safety community, and the communications industry to get this right.

Thank you.

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