



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 21, 2010

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FCC TAKES FIRST STEP TO HELP REVOLUTIONIZE AMERICA'S 9-1-1 SERVICES FOR CONSUMERS, FIRST RESPONDERS

Rapid Sharing of Videos, Photos and Data to Improve Emergency Response

Washington, D.C. -- The Federal Communications Commission today took an important step to revolutionize America's 9-1-1 services for consumers and first responders by adopting a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) seeking public comment on how Next Generation 911 (NG911) can enable the public to obtain emergency assistance by means of advanced communications technologies beyond traditional voice-centric devices.

The FCC has undertaken this proceeding in response to a recommendation in the National Broadband Plan seeking to harness the life-saving potential of text messaging, email, video and photos from mobile and landline broadband services. Despite the fact that there are more than 270 million wireless consumers nationwide and that approximately 70 percent of all 9-1-1 calls are made from mobile hand-held devices, today's 9-1-1 systems support voice-centric communications only and are not designed to transfer and receive text messaging, videos or photos. In some emergency situations -- especially in circumstances where a call could further jeopardize someone's life and safety -- texting may be the only way to reach out for help. In addition, many Americans, particularly those with disabilities, rely on text messaging as their primary means of communication.

The sharing of timely and relevant videos and photos would provide first responders with on-the-ground information to help assess and address emergencies in real-time. For example, these technologies could help report crimes as they are happening thus giving law enforcement officials an increased advantage when responding.

The NOI asked a comprehensive set of questions that address a number of issues related to the deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1 services, including, but not limited to:

- The technical feasibility and limitations of text messaging video streaming and photos;
- Consumer privacy issues, particularly related to the sharing of personal electronic medical data;
- Development of technical and policy standards;
- Consumer education and awareness; and
- Inter-governmental coordination and coordination within the public safety community.

Action by the Commission, December 21, 2010, by NOI (FCC 10-200). Chairman Genachowski, and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker. Separate statements issued by Chairman Genachowski, and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker. PS Docket No. 10-255.

For additional information about the NOI, please contact Patrick Donovan, Policy and Licensing Division, FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, at 202-418-2413 or via email: Patrick.Donovan@fcc.gov.

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