21st CENTURY 9-1-1

In December, the FCC will take steps to revolutionize America's 9-1-1 system by harnessing the life-saving potential of text, photo, and video in emergencies.

Background:

- **The National Broadband Plan laid out a vision for next-generation 9-1-1 that harnesses cutting-edge technologies to help save lives.** 9-1-1, which was established as the national emergency number in 1968, has been a wildly successful lifeline to those in distress. Americans place more than 237 million 9-1-1 calls every year -- 650,000 per day.

- **Seventy percent of 9-1-1 calls come from mobile phones.** But increasingly, consumers are using their mobile phones less to make calls, and more for texting and sending pictures and videos. These new technologies have the potential to revolutionize emergency response by providing public safety officials with critical real-time, on-the-ground information.

- **Today's 9-1-1 system is not equipped to take advantage of new technologies.** 9-1-1 call centers lack the technical capability to receive texts, photos, videos, and other data. Many 9-1-1 call centers don't have access to broadband, which makes it difficult to receive incoming data, particularly in large volume. Finally, call center operators have not been trained how to effectively communicate using these new technologies.

- **The technological limitations of 9-1-1 can have tragic, real-world consequences.** During the 2007 Virginia Tech campus shooting, students and witnesses desperately tried to send texts to 9-1-1 that local dispatchers never received. If these messages had gone through, first responders may have arrived on the scene faster with firsthand intelligence about the life-threatening situation that was unfolding.

- **Bringing 9-1-1 into the 21st century is one of the FCC's key public safety priorities.** In December, the FCC will launch a proceeding, as recommended in the National Broadband Plan, to determine how to transition the current system to broadband-enabled, next-generation 9-1-1. This action will build on the FCC's recent order to improve 9-1-1 by beefing up location-accuracy requirements so that first responders can quickly find people who reach out for help on their mobile phones.

Benefits of Next-Generation 9-1-1

- *Text for Help*: Many Americans, particularly those with disabilities, rely on texting as their primary means of communication. In some emergency situations -- especially in circumstances where a call could further jeopardize someone's life and safety -- texting is the only way to reach out for help. Next-generation 9-1-1 will allow call centers to receive texts and put them to use.

- *Real-Time Rapid Response*: Mobile video and photos provide first responders with on-the-ground information that helps them assess and address the emergency in real-time. These technologies also help report crime as it is happening. Next-generation 9-1-1 would expand the multi-media capabilities of 9-1-1 call centers.

- *Automatic Alerting*: Next-generation 9-1-1 would 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, telematics, and consumer electronics in automobiles.