



# NEWS

**Federal Communications Commission**  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500  
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>  
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.  
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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**NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:**  
Robert Kenny: 202-418-2668  
[Robert.Kenny@fcc.gov](mailto:Robert.Kenny@fcc.gov)

## **FCC'S PUBLIC SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY BUREAU REQUESTS VERIZON TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT FUTURE BLOCKING OF 911 CALLS**

*Approximately 10,000 Emergency Calls Made by Residents in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties (MD) on the Verizon Network Didn't Connect to 911 Call Centers during the January 26<sup>th</sup> Snowstorm*

Washington, D.C. – Jamie Barnett, Rear Admiral (ret.) and Chief of the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, this week requested that Verizon provide the Commission with a full assessment of what caused the failure to connect approximately 10,000 wireless emergency calls to 911 call centers in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, Maryland, during the January 26, 2011 snowstorm, identify remedies to help prevent similar occurrences in the future, and implement solutions to quickly restore reliable network operations when there are problems.

The Bureau's preliminary findings show that on January 26<sup>th</sup> all 14 circuits in the Verizon network that properly route all wireless calls in Montgomery County failed and nine of 10 Verizon circuits in Prince George's County failed over a five-hour period on the night in question. This resulted in approximately 8,300 blocked 911 calls in Montgomery County and 1,700 blocked 911 calls in Prince George's County that evening.

Rear Admiral Barnett in a letter delivered to Verizon yesterday wrote, "... any 911 call which is not connected can have serious consequences, but the large number of missed 911 calls on January 26<sup>th</sup> is alarming. The public rightly expects that they can use 911 to reach the appropriate first responders in an emergency." He further stated, "We are particularly concerned that this problem may be widespread across Verizon's footprint" and that Verizon investigate the extent of the problem across its network. The full text of the letter is available here: <http://publicsafety.fcc.gov/pshs/releases/index.htm>.

In addition to the cases highlighted above, the letter notes that similar incidents involving blocked 911 calls occurred in 2010 in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, with one incident resulting in delayed urgent medical attention for a caller who was unable to reach 911. A similar problem with wireless 911 calls being blocked from reaching a Fairfax County, Virginia 911 call center occurred on January 26, 2011 as well.

The Bureau is requesting that Verizon respond to the following questions, among others, to address the public safety concerns raised by the series of recent incidents in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties:

- Q) Is the problem localized to the 911 call centers using the Hyattsville and Rockville, Maryland selective routers?
- Q) Was this the same problem that occurred in Fairfax County, Virginia?
- Q) Can this problem occur elsewhere in the nation?
- Q) Has this problem occurred in other states and if so, in which states?

Chief Barnett requested that Verizon complete its assessment and provide a comprehensive response to the FCC no later than March 10, 2011. In addition to the written response, Chief Barnett has requested a meeting with Verizon representatives within the next two weeks to discuss the matter and identify appropriate resolutions to address the problems identified.

For additional information please contact Lisa Fowlkes, Deputy Bureau Chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau at (202) 418-7452 or via email: [lisa.fowlkes@fcc.gov](mailto:lisa.fowlkes@fcc.gov).

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