

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: *Amending the Definition of Interconnected VoIP Service in Section 9.3 of the Commission's Rules*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, GN Docket No. 11-117; *Wireless E911 Location Accuracy Requirements*, Third Report and Order, PS Docket No. 07-114; *E911 Requirements for IP-Enabled Service Providers*, Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 05-196

The Communications Act assigns this Commission important responsibilities with respect to public safety communications, none more significant than ensuring that our first responders are able to find and provide assistance to Americans in harm's way.

We are at a time of great opportunity and serious challenge when it comes to harnessing communications technologies to help first responders and save lives.

A nationwide, interoperable mobile broadband network would put the communications tools consumers take for granted in the hands of police, firefighters, and other first responders. It would implement an important recommendation of the 9/11 Commission. I applaud the Senate Commerce Committee for recently passing legislation to build a broadband public safety network; the House Energy and Commerce Committee is working on similar legislation. And we will continue to work with Congress to make that vision a reality.

On emergency alerts, modern communications give us the opportunity to alert people to disasters anytime, anywhere. But until recently, this was just a theory.

I was pleased to announce at Ground Zero the accelerated deployment of a new national mobile alerting system – PLAN – which will allow people to receive emergency alerts directly on their mobile phones. This is complementary to the broadcast emergency alert system. A similar system saved lives during the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and it will make a real difference here in the U.S. during, for example, disasters like the recent tornadoes in the Southeast, where every second of warning counts.

With respect to 9-1-1, there are also big opportunities and challenges – opportunities to connect people and 9-1-1 responders through all forms of communications. But today's 9-1-1 system does not empower the means of communication consumers take for granted. It does not provide for sending texts to 9-1-1, or photos or video.

Today, the average American sends about 20 texts a day, and the average teenager sends over 100. Yet we know of instances like the tragedy at Virginia Tech where texts to 9-1-1 went unanswered. Who knows how many other times this has happened, but even once is too many.

Today only about one-quarter of Public Safety Answering Points use broadband to process 9-1-1 calls. And that's only the first step to achieving next generation 9-1-1. We are hard at work developing a game plan to accelerate next-generation 9-1-1, and I will continue to make this an agency priority.

Today's action addresses another major opportunity and challenge – that of ensuring that *mobile* 9-1-1 works as it should. For both the current 9-1-1 system and next generation 9-1-1 to work, we have to be sure that callers can be located, wherever they are, whatever technology they're using to communicate.

Mobile phones allow people to call 9-1-1 from anywhere, including places where traditional phones aren't available. And the percentage of 9-1-1 calls from mobile has increased dramatically – from about 25% in 2001 to over 65% today.

When Americans call 9-1-1 from their landlines, first responders receive accurate location information more than 98 percent of the time. But one quarter of all households have now “cut the cord” and given up their landlines for wireless phones. Others are turning to alternative voice services that may not enable a PSAP to locate a caller or may not support 9-1-1 at all. When Americans call 9-1-1 from their mobile phones, first responders are about 50 percent less likely to receive precise information about the caller's location. One half as likely. And this affects both rural and urban areas. The inaccuracy can be up to one or two miles, or fail to pinpoint the caller's location inside a building, particularly a tall building, or the PSAP may get no location information at all. We must do better.

A consumer who has come to expect an alert on her cell phone that a nearby restaurant is offering a discounted meal should also be able to expect that when she contacts 9-1-1, first responders will know where she is.

Today's Order sets us on the path to improving the delivery of accurate location information when the public calls for help. The *Third Report and Order* continues the process we began last September of strengthening our existing Enhanced 9-1-1 (or E9-1-1) location accuracy rules, by requiring all wireless carriers to meet the more stringent metrics of the handset-based location accuracy standard. The item has a necessary transition plan to come into compliance. I encourage commercial mobile carriers to beat the deadlines, as many mobile carriers have committed to accelerate implementation of the new PLAN emergency mobile alerts.

We also are initiating periodic testing of the ability of wireless networks to provide accurate location information to ensure that first responders can rely on the location information they receive. And we extend that challenge to finding and developing cost effective solutions to the problem of indoor location accuracy, which poses difficulties when callers are deep inside buildings without a strong signal.

In that same vein, I encourage VoIP providers to work with us to ensure that VoIP consumers can call 9-1-1 in an emergency with first responders getting the location information that can save lives.

Today's *Second Further Notice* also explores ways to ensure that newer communications technologies like VoIP service leverage existing technology to provide 9-1-1 centers with critical and potentially life-saving automatic location information.

I thank the staff of our Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, and my Special Counsel and Legal Advisor, Amy Levine, for their considerable and ongoing work in this area. I look forward to working closely with the CSRIC, the public safety community, communications providers, and other stakeholders to continue to harness technology to improve our nation's 9-1-1 service.