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Federal Communications Commission
445 12th 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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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Neil Grace, 202-418-0506
Email: neil.grace@fcc.gov

FCC Chairman Genachowski Announces Five-Step Action Plan to Improve the Deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1

Genachowski unveils FCC strategy to harness the power of new technologies to save lives, enable the public to send emergency text, data and video to 9-1-1 and build a 21st century emergency communications system

Washington, D.C. – At the 2011 Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) conference in Philadelphia, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski today announced his five-step action plan to chart the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) services. Working with the public safety community, carriers, manufacturers and other service providers, Chairman Genachowski’s goal is to ensure that effective emergency response is a critical element of the broadband environment.

Under the Chairman’s five-step action plan, the FCC will: (1) develop automatic location accuracy mechanisms for NG-911, (2) facilitate the completion and implementation of NG911 technical standards for the hardware and software that carriers and public safety answering points (PSAPs) use to communicate NG911 information, (3) work with state 911 authorities, other Federal agencies, and other governing entities to provide technical expertise and develop a coordinated approach to NG911 governance, (4) develop an NG911 Funding Model focused on the cost-effectiveness of the NG911 network infrastructure linking PSAPs and carriers and (5) enable consumers to send text, photos, and videos to PSAPs.

Next month, the FCC is expected to launch a rulemaking to consider how to accelerate NG911 adoption to help answer practical, technical questions about how to enable text, photo, and video transmission to 911, including how to ensure adequate broadband infrastructure to deliver the bandwidth PSAPs will need to provide NG911. As part of the proceeding, the FCC will examine interim solutions for ensuring that carriers and service providers support transmission of text-to-911.

Chairman Genachowski said, “It’s hard to imagine that airlines can send text messages if your flight is delayed, but you can’t send a text message to 9-1-1 in an emergency. The unfortunate truth is that the capability of our emergency response communications has not kept pace with commercial innovation – has not kept pace with what ordinary people now do every day with communications devices. The shift to NG911 can’t be about if, but about when and how.”

NG911 supports seamless, end-to-end IP-based communication of emergency-related voice, text, data, photos, and video between the public and public safety answering points. NG911 systems will continue to support the legacy 911 system on a transitional basis for as long as is necessary.

The announcement builds on Chairman Genachowski’s strong public safety agenda, including launching of Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN), strengthening the FCC’s existing enhanced E-911 location accuracy rules, laying the groundwork for a nationwide, interoperable public safety network and granting waivers to build out the public safety network.