

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: *Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications; Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*, PS Docket Nos. 10-255, 11-153

It has been less than two weeks since the 10th anniversary of 9/11; and less than a month after a rare East Coast earthquake, and after Hurricane Irene caused major flooding and serious damage. These events remind us of the vital importance of our mission to harness the power of communications technology to enhance public safety and save lives, and of the need to ensure that our emergency response systems keep pace with how people communicate.

Public safety is a priority of every member of this Commission. It has been a focus of mine since my first day as Chairman, when I instructed the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to conduct a thorough review of the agency's preparedness for emergencies. Since then, working together, we have advanced our public safety agenda on multiple fronts, and I'm proud of our accomplishments. But there is still work to be done.

With input from the public safety community, our federal partners, and other stakeholders, we have worked to establish an interoperability framework for a nationwide public safety broadband network. The future of that network is in the hands of Congress, including authorizing voluntary incentive auctions to fund the public safety network. I am hopeful that Congress will act, but I am also concerned about further delay. Every day that passes risks not only the economic benefits of incentive auctions; it also delays the substantial public safety benefits of the network, and increases the costs of building the network.

An interoperable mobile broadband network for first responders is necessary to harness communications technology for public safety, but it is not sufficient. And so we've pursued and continue to pursue multiple initiatives.

Working with FEMA, local public safety authorities, and the wireless industry, we are launching on an accelerated basis the Personal Localized Alerting Network. In the event of an emergency, PLAN allows government officials to send text-like, targeted alerts to all enabled mobile devices in a geographic area. In just a few months, PLAN will go live in New York City, and it will launch nationwide in April 2012.

We have worked with industry to develop best practices to improve the reliability of our communications networks, and we have developed our outage reporting systems to provide situational awareness about communications outages in emergencies. To ensure that our networks keep pace with technological change, we've launched proceedings to consider additional steps to ensure network reliability, including whether to expand outage reporting to the broadband networks that the public increasingly relies on.

We have stepped up our support of restoration efforts in the wake of disasters. For example, we sent FCC personnel to Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake to help with on-the-ground assessment of communications infrastructure, and since the Japan earthquake in March we have been working with our colleagues in Japan both to provide assistance and to learn lessons for the future. Here at home, Hurricane Irene once again proved the value of our Roll Call technology units that can provide vital situational awareness of wireless transmissions – from mobile to broadcast – during times of disaster.

We continue to explore new and innovative ways to use communications technology to assist in disaster recovery efforts. Today's report from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau on deployable aerial communications is a promising example of such innovation.

We have increased our outreach and public education efforts to help the public understand how they can use communications technology to prepare for and respond to disasters. Yesterday, we joined with FEMA to release a tip sheet with recommendations for how consumers can best communicate with public safety and family during and after disasters. We will work with other governmental entities as well as the private sector to maximize consumer awareness of these tips and advice.

Which brings us to 9-1-1, a cornerstone of our public safety communications infrastructure. Last month, I announced a five-step plan for accelerating the deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1. Next Generation 9-1-1 is the emergency response system that will run on the broadband networks of the 21st century. NG9-1-1 will add incredible value to our 9-1-1 system and all the people who rely on it.

The plan lays out the comprehensive and coordinated strategy we need to avoid patchwork deployment and years of delay in developing NG9-1-1. The five steps are:

- Develop location accuracy mechanisms for NG9-1-1;
- Enable consumers to send text, photos, and videos to PSAPs;
- Develop an NG9-1-1 cost-effectiveness model;
- Facilitate the completion and implementation of NG9-1-1 technical standards; and
- Develop a NG9-1-1 governance framework.

We are implementing this plan. In July, we launched the first step with our Order and Further Notice on location accuracy, which sought to close the accuracy gap between mobile and landline 9-1-1 calls and to lay the groundwork for location accuracy in Next Generation 9-1-1 networks and applications.

With the NPRM we consider today, we are moving on the second step of our action plan: to enable consumers to send text, photos, and videos to PSAPs. Our action rests on two basic concepts.

The first concept is that in an emergency, consumers should be able to reach out for help with whatever means of communications they are accustomed to using. When I visited DC's 9-1-1 call center on September 9th, I asked Director Jennifer Greene about the challenges she faced. She told me that her biggest concern is "keeping up with how the community communicates."

For an increasing number of wireless users, that means texting 9-1-1 should be available. Texting is also important for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, who are discarding their TTYs and turning with increasing frequency to more advanced but widely available methods of communications like smartphones. And we shouldn't stop at texting. It is of course increasingly commonplace to take photos or video on a mobile phone; people should be able to send that information directly to 9-1-1.

But today, if a mobile phone user attempts to send even a simple text to 9-1-1, it goes nowhere. That's what happened to the students at Virginia Tech who texted 9-1-1 during the terrible shooting several years ago. A tragedy during the 1990s – the carjacking and murder of Jennifer Koon in New York – was significant in spurring the initial focus on NG9-1-1, and is worth recalling. During the incident, Jennifer Koon was able to call 9-1-1 from her car phone but couldn't speak for fear of alerting her attacker. The PSAP kept the line open in the hopes the caller would say something, but she never did and was found dead two hours later. The ability to text 9-1-1 might have saved her life.

We have been urging the communications and technology communities to develop ways to implement Next Generation 9-1-1 quickly and cost-effectively. And it is encouraging that even as the 9-1-1 community works on long-term implementation of NG9-1-1, many vendors, service providers, and PSAPs are actively exploring and conducting trials of various text-to-9-1-1 methodologies. This technology could provide for text-to-9-1-1 implementation within a year and at lower costs than previously imagined.

In today's Notice, we are seeking comment on these trials and initiatives, including a text-to-9-1-1 proposal by Neustar, which I had the opportunity to see firsthand last week; a text-to-9-1-1 proposal by Intrado; the recently initiated SMS-to-9-1-1 trial in Durham, North Carolina; and the ATIS Interim Non-Voice Emergency Services initiative. This is the time to focus on innovation and problem-solving. I urge all companies, nonprofits, and research institutions in this area to develop by the end of this calendar year proposals to accelerate deployment of text-to-9-1-1 applications. We would like testing and test data so that we can move quickly on this national challenge. While accelerated text-to-9-1-1 methodologies may not provide all the functionality of a fully-realized NG9-1-1 system, they could yield significant public safety benefits while work on longer-term alternatives continues. The FCC will do its part to consider all alternatives and move forward quickly.

In addition to empowering people to communicate with 9-1-1 in all the ways they are used to communicating, the second concept underlying our action today is to make sure that Next Generation 9-1-1 gives first responders critical tools they need to manage a wide range of information during an emergency, through 21st century emergency command technology.

How might this work? Imagine a crane collapse that blocks a major city thoroughfare, causing injuries to numerous drivers and pedestrians and structural damage to nearby buildings and utilities. With NG9-1-1 technology, first responders in PSAPs would have access to texts, photos, and videos sent from the scene and could combine these with information from traffic cameras, automated sensors, databases with maps or building plans, and other sources. This would allow faster and more efficient assessment of the scope of the emergency, the amount and severity of injuries and property damage, and the impact on surrounding traffic and buildings. Using this real-time information, emergency managers would be able to decide how to optimize the deployment of police, fire, and emergency medical personnel, identify the need for any special equipment, determine the fastest routes for first responders to and from the scene, and decide whether to send alerts or evacuation notices to people in the area.

A few years ago, this technology may have sounded like science fiction, but today it's increasingly available for commercial purposes. Innovators are developing these technologies for first responders – from complex database access to mapping to gunshot sensors and other sensors – and the fundamental goal of today's Notice is to accelerate the development and deployment of these technologies as part of our emergency response communications infrastructure. I'm pleased that today in our new Technology Experience Center we will be showing demonstrations of NG911 and other public safety-related technologies.

Let me mention one more important topic in today's Notice -- a matter highlighted by our recent earthquake. Some wireless networks experienced congestion immediately following the earthquake, which prevented some 9-1-1 calls from going through. Unless we address this head-on, emergency events that result in a surge of mobile calls risk a level of congestion that can effectively block access to 9-1-1 from mobile devices during the period of congestion. That is why today's Notice considers the question of whether and how to prioritize 9-1-1 calls on both existing and next-generation mobile networks.

Some of the initiatives we are addressing – including 9-1-1 prioritization and enabling texting-to-9-1-1 – would increase the demands on our 9-1-1 call centers. In today’s Notice, we seek comment on ways that technology can provide a solution. In many areas, innovators and researchers are tackling the challenges of digital information overload. I call on our universities and the technology industry to help develop cost-effective tools and processes to enable PSAPs to better manage the flow of multiple NG9-1-1-related information streams. I have also directed our Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to coordinate with the Department of Defense to determine whether technologies used for situational awareness on battlefields could have application for our first responders in the event of emergencies.

Finally, even as we seek ways to reduce the cost of NG9-1-1 development and deployment, it is inevitable that upgrades to our 9-1-1 system will require funding. While the FCC is not a grant-making institution, we can provide policymakers with information about the costs associated with deploying the network infrastructure required to link PSAPs and carriers. Therefore, we are initiating the third step of our five-step plan – to develop a cost-effectiveness model -- with the cost study that the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau has presented today. This important study will inform states and localities, as well as Congress and federal agencies, about the cost implications of design choices as they plan their NG9-1-1 networks.

While we have now taken action to implement the first three steps of our action plan, we will also be initiating the remaining steps – establishing technical standards and governance – by working with our local, state, and federal partners, public safety, and commercial and other stakeholders and through agency action. I want to acknowledge the presence today of several leaders in this effort to make Next Generation 9-1-1 a reality, and thank them for their work so far: Greg Riddle, the President of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, or APCO, and Brian Fontes, CEO of the National Emergency Number Association, or NENA. In short, I am committed to doing what it takes to launch NG9-1-1 nationwide as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. This is an important national challenge, and I encourage broad engagement as we move forward.

I thank each of my colleagues and the staff of our Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for their considerable and ongoing work in this area, and thank the other bureaus – including our Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and Wireless Telecommunications Bureau – for their excellent input and collaboration.