

**REMARKS OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
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Thank you, Derrick Poarch, for your kind introduction.

I am very excited to be here at the APCO Annual Conference.

Let me thank APCO leadership and all of you for the extremely warm welcome I've received here in Minnesota. Let me also extend congratulations to incoming President Terry Hall.

I have already had the opportunity to meet many of you. In fact, one of the very first stops I made after I was sworn in as a Commissioner was at the APCO office just outside of Washington. I had a chance to sit down and speak with your leadership, including Gregg Riddle and Gigi Smith. I made a visit to APCO one of my highest priorities when I first arrived in office.

I also have made an ongoing commitment to get outside of Washington to visit you where you work.

In fact, during my first three months in office, I have visited two emergency communications centers in Virginia and one in California.

Tomorrow I will spend time at the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office just outside of Minneapolis.

During the rest of my first year in office I intend to do more of the same—and visit at least one public safety facility every month. I know that there is no substitute for seeing what you do up close—and no better way to understand the work you do to help keep us safe.

But for those of you that I have not met, let me take a minute to introduce myself.

I only recently joined the Federal Communications Commission, when I was sworn into office this past May.

But just because I am new to this job does not mean that I am new to public safety communications. I have worked on public safety issues for over a decade. So I know first-hand the hard work and commitment of so many of the people in this room.

I come to the agency from the staff of the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, where I served under the leadership of Senator Jay Rockefeller. While I was there Senator Rockefeller led the charge to reallocate a swath of 700 MHz spectrum called the D-block for use as part of a new, nationwide public safety network.

In addition to working with Senator Rockefeller, I had the great pleasure of working with Senator Amy Klobuchar, who also serves on the Commerce Committee. Senator Klobuchar is also a co-chair of the Congressional Next Generation 911 Caucus. I know she's a great champion of 911 and public safety. You can see for yourself when she speaks at lunch tomorrow.

So let me start by explaining how I look at public safety issues.

I believe that in public service, public safety is paramount. But that is more than instinct. It's the law. In the very first sentence of the Communications Act, Congress instructed the Commission to make available "to all the people of the United States . . . rapid, efficient, Nationwide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service" in order to promote the "safety of life and property[.]"

But I also believe technology is changing at a brisk pace. Our laws, regulations, and institutions have a hard time keeping up.

New technologies are remaking our commercial and civic life. They have the potential to remake emergency communications. In time, they will multiply the digital information that first responders have on hand. What lies ahead is a world with photographs, videos, and medical records that instantaneously inform every call. A world where more people, including the hearing impaired and non-English speakers, have more ability to reach out in times of trouble. And a world where more devices than ever before provide these functionalities.

But if we are honest, we must acknowledge that all of these new opportunities to improve emergency communications come hand-in-hand with new challenges.

So in the end, the question is not will technology change the way that we communicate in emergency. It will.

The question is how do we harness these changes so that you can do your jobs better; so that our emergency communications systems are stronger and more resilient; and so that we all are safer when tragedy strikes and the unthinkable occurs?

This is what I believe should guide us. And with that in mind, I want to speak to you about three issues today: the effort to develop a nationwide network for first responders; recent 911 outages; and progress on next generation 911.

First, let me start—appropriately—with FirstNet. FirstNet, as you may know, is the First Responder Network Authority. It was created in the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act. It's the independent authority charged with developing a nationwide, interoperable, public safety wireless broadband network using spectrum in the 700 MHz band. The law putting FirstNet in place passed last February. Already a lot of work is underway.

Just yesterday, our colleagues at the Department of Commerce announced the Board of Directors for FirstNet. This is an exciting development.

These are people with experience and know-how that can get things done. But they cannot do it alone. The way I see it is that this is not just a national network. This is your network. And you can make it your network with your local input and your local support.

Remember that there were those who thought public safety would never be able to secure nationwide spectrum like the D-block. There were those who said your community could never unify around one vision for public safety communications. And there were those who said you could never convince this Congress in this economy to pass a law to do something bold and do something new.

But you know what, you proved them wrong. Because of your efforts, Congress passed a law.

Now some are saying that building this kind of network will take a herculean effort and you are not up to the task. Will there be real challenges? Of course. But are you up to it? I think you are. Because what these doubters do not realize is that the first responders in this room perform herculean acts every day.

So get involved. Seize this opportunity. Explore what FirstNet can be when local, state, and federal public safety authorities come together. Explore how to develop public-private partnerships to make this work. With your input, we can meaningfully advance interoperable emergency communications in communities across the country.

Second, I want to speak briefly about recent 911 outages. In June, a fast-moving storm known as a derecho blew through the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic. In its wake we faced the wreckage that Mother Nature's wrath can produce—downed trees, blocked roads, power outages, and serious failures in our communications systems. The damage was especially severe in the Washington region.

At too many of the region's public safety centers, there was an eerie quiet in the aftermath of the storm, as calls into 911 quickly and implausibly ceased. It was many hours before calls returned, putting the safety of too many at risk. I had the opportunity to learn about this first hand, when I visited call centers run by APCO members like Steve Souder and Carol Adams.

So I called for an investigation from the Commission into what happened—and I am proud to say that the Commission has one underway. In fact, the agency's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Chief, David Turetsky, provided an excellent update on it at a regulatory panel here yesterday. I am grateful to him and his team of experts for the work they are doing.

The candor of our carriers and public safety officials in the aftermath of the storm has been impressive. We now know that as many as nine generators failed to start, disabling

hundreds of network transportation systems. But more work is required to understand how to make sure this does not happen again.

Even if you were not affected by this storm, if you sit in this audience, I want to ask you to use this as a reminder. Outages can happen anywhere. Go back to your communities and the communications systems you work with and think about how you may be vulnerable. Think about how your own back-up plans can be updated.

Third and finally, I want to talk about next generation 911. Last August, the FCC outlined a five-step plan to further the development of next generation 911.

The steps included developing location accuracy mechanisms; enabling consumers to send texts, photographs, and videos to public safety answering points; facilitating the completion and implementation of technical standards; developing a model for governance; and developing a funding framework.

So one year later, where do we stand? We are making progress. Our advisory groups are doing good work on technical standards and on efforts to make next-generation communications more accessible to people with disabilities. We have developed cost models and continue to study the benefits and genuine complexities of texting to 911.

Now I know that most of you are thinking that this is all well and good, but how do we pay for it? Fair question.

The not so good news is that the Commission does not have the authority to fund next generation 911.

But the good news is that Congress has taken steps to provide you with some of the support you need.

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act reestablished the 911 Implementation Coordination Office and directed it to conduct a comprehensive study of next generation 911 costs. More than that, it provides up to \$115 million in grant funding for next generation 911 projects, based on revenues from the Commission's upcoming spectrum auctions. So stay tuned.

For my part, when I think about next generation 911, I now think about the individuals I have seen taking emergency calls. I am always struck by their grace under pressure. But I am also struck by the number of systems they use for a single call and the sheer volume of information they have to understand and process.

In the not so distant future, this flood of information could turn into a digital deluge of photographs and videos. And it is here that so-called cloud computing holds real promise.

By moving systems into the cloud, we can make information available to the right people at the right time. For instance, a call taker may not need to see the video of a car accident. In fact, the video might even be distracting. But for a police officer being dispatched to the scene,

the video could be vital. By uploading information to the cloud, the information can be available for the people who need it, when they need it.

What this drives home yet again is that the way we communicate is changing. Innovation amazes us all. But we need to make sure that as commercial systems advance, our communications systems for emergencies keep pace. We also need to make sure that consumers understand the benefits—and limitations—of new technologies when they reach out for emergency assistance.

This will not be simple and it will not be easy. But the rewards are tremendous.

Consider an object lesson from right here in Minnesota.

It was five years ago that the I-35 bridge collapsed. It was one of the worst bridge disasters in our history.

In the aftermath, the National Transportation Safety Board found flaws in the bridge's metal plates that connect one steel beam to another.

But another report—from the Federal Communications Commission—revealed something else. Land Mobile Radio systems were used to communicate during the crisis. The Commission found that in the future a single fourth generation wireless tower could provide several times the capacity of these systems—meaning more bandwidth at lower cost.

So if we get this right, we can take emergency response to new heights.

If we get this right, we will take new technologies and put them to use to build a better, stronger, and smarter emergency communications system.

If we get this right, we can make this country safer.

And I know it will be grand to look back and say we did it and that the people in this audience were a part of it.

So thank you for your time. Thank you for the work you do every day to help save lives and help keep us safe. I look forward to continuing to work with you and work with APCO.