

STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. McDOWELL

RE: *Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications, Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*; Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

To begin, I want to congratulate our colleagues in the private sector for their time and energy in hammering out an agreement to begin the process toward rolling out text-to-911. Our thanks should go to: the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials; NENA – The 9-1-1 Association; AT&T; Sprint-Nextel; T-Mobile; and Verizon. We are grateful for your work, as well as the important suggestions from the Commission's Emergency Access Advisory Committee.

Next, a word of caution. The FCC's action today on text-to-911 should not be misconstrued by anyone that, from this day forward, consumers can actually text to public safety and expect a response. That's simply not possible in most places. The last result I want emanating from this notice is consumers who may soon end up in a dire circumstance to have the incorrect expectation that they can summon emergency responders via text based on what we are doing today. We are merely laying the groundwork for future action, but we are still very far from that goal.

Having said that, a step toward a more comprehensive upgrade of the nation's 9-1-1 system, this voluntary framework encompasses a near-term opportunity to meet the emergency communications needs of mobile subscribers who use SMS for day-to-day communications, including individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired. Just as important, the agreement includes a pledge to work together with the Commission on consumer outreach efforts and education efforts. We are off to a good start and some providers will implement sooner rather than later. Thus, it will take a while before text-to-911 is fully available. We all agree on the importance of managing realistic expectations regarding the availability and limitations of text-to-911.

With respect to the further notice, I am pleased that we continue to ask important questions about the Commission's legal authority in this area. Ensuring clear and effective communications in times of emergency is a key aspect of the Commission's mission. I thank Chairman Genachowski for his willingness to accept suggestions that fine-tune our focus on the jurisdictional aspects of this matter. Thank you also to the staff in the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for your work.