

**STATEMENT OF FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
SUPERSTORM SANDY FIELD HEARING
NEW YORK, NY AND HOBOKEN, NJ
FEBRUARY 5, 2013**

Superstorm Sandy was one of the most devastating natural disasters ever to hit this region. It underscored something important: how essential modern communications like mobile and broadband have become to our daily lives.

They connect us to family, work, and emergency services. And we sure notice when we can't get through on our phones or connect to the Internet or get TV or radio news.

That's true all the time, and especially true in times of emergency – whether you are calling 911, checking on the well-being of loved ones, getting emergency information, or just trying to return to work in the days following a crisis. It's true for mobile and broadband, for broadcast and cable TV, and for radio as well. Each service provides enormous benefits during times of emergency. We benefit from the multiple sources of information and connectivity. And we know the costs of losing service.

In addition to illustrating the essential role of communications services, this unprecedented storm also revealed challenges that require a national dialogue on how to ensure the resiliency of communications networks – and action to address communications outages and the need for resilient communications networks.

When the storm occurred, the FCC activated its Disaster Information Reporting System in order to assess the state of network outages. The data we received soon after the storm indicated that approximately 25 percent of cell sites and cable services in the affected 10-state area were not operational.

Of course those figures were much greater in hard-hit areas of New York and New Jersey. I visited New York shortly after the storm, and I saw first-hand the devastation, particularly in lower Manhattan.

Many of the challenges exposed by Sandy are complex. An extremely important example: the interrelation of our electric grid and our communications networks, two critical elements of modern infrastructure.

The fact is we rely on our electric grid to power individual devices, to power antenna towers and other elements of fixed and mobile communications networks, and to power the central offices, switches and other sophisticated equipment that connect it all together. We may not know yet exactly what caused the Super Bowl power outage on Sunday, but people from New York and New Jersey already knew the consequences of losing power, and the consequences of aging infrastructure.

This is why President Obama has made modernizing American Infrastructure a national priority.

Our nation's communications infrastructure is a vital part of our public safety and national security. The inability to communicate with family and emergency personnel during a disaster is simply unacceptable. We must meet this moment with smart action from all sectors to ensure that communications networks are working when people need them most.

Much has been done. Much more needs to be done.

At the FCC, for example, in the last few years we have worked to drive massive private investment in network infrastructure to modernize networks and improve service. Capital investment in U.S. wireless networks has grown by over 25% annually since 2009, and total investment in wired and wireless broadband infrastructure exceeded \$60 billion last year, making this one of the largest sectors for private investment in the U.S. economy.

Together with my fellow Commissioners, we have taken steps to launch wireless emergency alerts to allow local authorities to send warning and other texts to people in affected areas; to facilitate text-to-911 on mobile phones; and to improve location accuracy for mobile 911 so emergency personnel can more quickly locate people in need.

Last month, the FCC issued a detailed report examining the failures of 911 communications after the derecho, which caused massive power outages across the mid-Atlantic this past summer. A key take-away from that report was that many of the problems encountered at that time could have been avoided if known best practices had been followed.

Today we focus on what we can learn from Sandy – how we can ensure network reliability when we need it the most. We'll have two panels here this morning on “Public and Private Sector Responses to Sandy” and “Assessing Network Resiliency – Lessons Learned from Sandy”, and this afternoon we'll hold a hearing in New Jersey with an additional two panels on “Communicating During Times of Emergency” and “New Ideas to Improve Communications Services”. We will be having two additional hearings in other parts of the country and we look forward to learning from additional voices on these critical questions.

Throughout this work, we are focused on advancing four core goals: Improving network resiliency – How can communications outages be prevented in the first place? Improving restoration – When outages do occur, how can network recovery be hastened? Empowering the public – How can the American people be better prepared for and better cope with disasters? Unleashing technological solutions – How can new technologies be harnessed to promote the resiliency and restoration of communications networks, as well as emergency care and response.

Our efforts are integrated with the work of the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, led by HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, to make sure that all the communities impacted by Sandy bounce back and are better prepared in the event of future disasters.

Working together, I believe we must and we can improve the reliability of our communications networks and enhance the safety of the American people.