

STATEMENT OF FCC COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN
2nd FCC National Hearing on Network Resilience and Reliability
San Francisco, California

Good afternoon everyone. I am very sorry that I could not join you in person. But allow me to thank the Ames Research Center, the career staff of the FCC, and all others who made it possible, to hold this critically important hearing.

As a native South Carolinian, I know all too well how terrifying catastrophic weather events can be. And as an FCC Commissioner, I take very seriously the obligation Congress gave us, in the very first section of the Communications Act, to promote safety of life and property, through the use of wire and radio communications.

Three weeks ago, we held discussions in New York's Lower Manhattan, and Hoboken, New Jersey -- two areas that suffered substantial damage to their infrastructure and networks during Super Storm Sandy. Millions experienced significant communications outages and we heard testimony from first responders, communications service providers, and government officials about what went right, and what went wrong. Then and during this, our second national hearing, we seek to explore ways that stakeholders can promote greater network reliability so that we all have access to communications services when we need them the most -- during emergencies.

Those discussions highlighted a few issues worth noting. First, we tend to treat each network as independent in our current telecommunications reliability framework. But the reality is that one network is inextricably linked to the other. A person facing a storm surge's rising waters, may have a wireless device to call for help, but that call will not be answered by a dispatcher without dependable wireline and electrical networks.

Second, we have to be prepared for the unexpected. As the fires in Breezy Point, New York demonstrated, related disasters can quickly follow severe weather events. So, we need to be more nimble. One way to do this is by continuously reviewing laws and regulations and eliminating those that have unintentionally erected barriers to, for example, temporary cell towers being sited, and fuel trucks from entering communities that desperately need help.

Third, we should ensure that we can handle calls from diverse communities, including those facing communications difficulties such as language barriers or accessibility challenges. And what about our warning network? Are emergency alerts able to be understood by all? True preparedness requires clear communication.

We may not have as many wildfires or experience the magnitude and intensity of earthquakes as the Golden State. But what is universally clear, is the fact that addressing the challenges we face, in preparing for future disasters, will require constant review and fresh thinking. I look forward to reviewing the testimony from the panelists. Thank you.