

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER  
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We are here today to understand what happens when disasters wreak havoc with our communications systems—and how modern technology can provide us with the tools to restore our networks, make them more resilient, and make us more safe.

Let me begin by telling you about two recent images that inform my thinking. First, I just returned from Barcelona, where I was privileged to attend the Mobile World Congress. Seventy thousand people from across the globe made their way to the capital of Catalonia. They packed in wide halls and sat in narrow meeting rooms to witness new wireless technologies and take part in discussions. It was as diverse a group as I have ever seen. But they had one thing in common—a deep, abiding belief in the ability of digital age wireless services to remake the world we live in by expanding opportunity, fostering economic growth, and improving civic life everywhere. This is the image that stays with me. And now this is an image that inspires.

Second image. Shortly after Hurricane Sandy tore apart parts of the mid-Atlantic, I toured a telecommunications central office in lower New York weeks after the flood waters had receded from the street. The subterranean rooms where our networks come together were still damp. Technicians rushed this way and that, trying to make sense of an impenetrable snarl of lines and the harm done to so many submerged switches and servers. The image was post-apocalyptic. After all, these are the networks we depend on every day.

Those two images strike me because together they demonstrate vividly the great power of the digital age and also its extraordinary fragility. Our lives are widely enhanced by and also widely dependent on communications infrastructure. What we are doing today is wrestling with this power and fragility, with the possibilities from enhancement, and the consequences of our dependence.

We began this conversation earlier this month in New York and New Jersey, both hard hit by Hurricane Sandy. Continuing it here in California makes good sense. After all, the West Coast faces unique natural challenges from earthquakes to wildfires that can harm communications infrastructure. And it is home to Silicon Valley, the tip of the spear of innovation, where new network, energy, and social media technologies are being deployed that have the potential to transform network resiliency and emergency response.

So today we have an opportunity to learn how new technologies can help us answer tough questions about the resiliency and reliability of our networks. For instance, an increasing portion of the population no longer relies on traditional wireline phones. One in three

households relies exclusively on wireless phones. Wireless phones and the towers that serve them are dependent on commercial power. What happens when the power goes out? How do we ensure that back-up power is where it needs to be and that providers have access to fuel for generators? And how do we make sure that consumers are prepared too—with back-up batteries or solar chargers?

We also have an opportunity to talk about how social media and crowdsourcing technologies can help us respond to emergencies and change the way we gather and disseminate information.

We have a lot of ground to cover. So thank you the participants who are joining us today. You will help us build our record. You will help us grapple with the images I laid out at the start: the ways the digital age makes us more powerful, and the ways we need to reduce the fragility that comes with our dependence. You will help us all be more safe, and I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.