

**PREPARED REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
NETWORK RESILIENCY AND RELIABILITY FIELD HEARING
MOFFET FIELD, CALIFORNIA
FEBRUARY 28, 2013**

Welcome to today's FCC field hearing on improving the resiliency and reliability of America's communications networks during disasters.

I'd like to welcome and acknowledge my former FCC colleague and now Commissioner Sandoval of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and California State Senator Alex Padilla. I would also like to acknowledge Representative Eshoo. I want to thank her for her leadership on public safety issues in general, and Next Generation 911 in particular. She had wanted to be here today but Congress is in session back in Washington.

It is fitting that we are meeting in Silicon Valley because today's hearing will focus on how next-generation technologies and social media tools can enhance communications during times of emergency, like the aftermath of an earthquake.

And Ames Research Center is a hub for cutting-edge research and development, while Moffett Field is a staging area for FEMA in times of disaster.

This is our second field hearing examining challenges to America's communications networks during disasters.

Earlier this month we held sessions in New York and New Jersey, in areas particularly hard hit by Superstorm Sandy.

Each disaster, whether natural or man-made, underscores both the importance and the challenges of maintaining reliable communications during emergencies.

Modern communications, like mobile and broadband, have become essential to our daily lives.

This is especially true when disaster strikes - whether you are calling 911 for help, checking on the well-being of loved ones, or just trying to return to work in the days following a crisis.

These are also times when we are reminded of the vital role that radio and broadcast, cable, and satellite TV play in bringing us critical information.

Our nation's communications infrastructure is critical to public safety and national security.

Consumers are able to communicate in more ways and on more devices than ever before. Yet many are unable to contact their family or 911 during disasters - which is simply unacceptable.

It will take smart action from all sectors to ensure that communications networks are working

when people need them the most.

But there is great opportunity to leverage advances in technology to improve disaster-time communications.

What are we doing at the FCC to harness the power of technology to improve public safety? A few examples:

We are working to accelerate the deployment of Next-Generation 911, which will make emergency communications more resilient and give public safety workers more information to use in assessing and responding to emergencies.

A few days ago, we reported to Congress on steps it could take to hasten the deployment of NG911.

And along with my fellow Commissioners, we are laying the groundwork for consumers to reach 911 by text message when necessary – a much needed change to keep pace with how the public communicates today.

We took steps to launch wireless emergency alerts, so that consumers can get geographically targeted, text-based emergency warnings on their wireless devices.

We extended our network outage reporting requirements to include interconnected VoIP providers, which now supply one-third of households with phone service.

FCC staff analyzes these network outage reports to identify issues and trends, and then works with industry to address problems.

We also use our Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS) to track outages and restoration progress after major events, like Hurricane Isaac and Superstorm Sandy.

This situational awareness helps us to support communications restoration efforts as well as FEMA's broader disaster recovery efforts.

FCC staff conducted a comprehensive analysis of the widespread 911 service failures that occurred in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic region after last summer's derecho storm.

Based on those findings, I called for a rulemaking to improve the reliability of 911 networks.

My fellow commissioners and I will consider a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at our March open meeting.

Our network operations center works 24/7 every day of the year.

And when a disaster strikes, our employees are there to support communications providers and

government partners with restoration efforts.

For example, after Superstorm Sandy, we issued special temporary authorizations to help radio stations stay on the air and enable out-of-town power crews to use radios at a disaster site.

We worked with FEMA to secure fuel supplies for a switching center and deployed technical teams to assess outages in a hard-hit area in New York.

And our assistance to local broadcasters includes particular outreach to non-English-language radio stations, since these can be the only source of vital information for some communities.

The Commission's field hearings will help us determine what additional steps we can take.

We are focused on advancing four core goals:

- 1) Improving network resiliency – How can communications outages be prevented in the first place?
- 2) Improving restoration – When outages do occur, how can network recovery be hastened?
- 3) Empowering the public – How can the American people be better prepared for and better cope with disasters? And,
- 4) 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 first hearing focused on the complex challenges exposed by Superstorm Sandy.

The interdependency of our electric grid and our communications networks emerged as a key challenge we must tackle.

Simply put, keeping communications networks operational during disasters requires keeping them powered.

That is why I'm pleased that our first panel of experts today will discuss smart power solutions, mesh and self-healing networks, and other cutting-edge technologies that can improve the performance of communications networks.

Our second panel of experts will discuss innovative social media, open data, and geo-location applications that can help Americans communicate during emergencies.

Both topics share a common theme: how can we take advantages of technological innovations to improve communications and keep Americans safer when disaster strikes?

I'm looking forward to an interesting and informative session.