

**STATEMENT OF
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: Improving the Resiliency of Mobile Communications Networks; Reliability and Continuity of Communications Networks, Including Broadband Technologies, PS Docket 13-239; PS Docket No. 11-60, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 13-125 (September 26, 2013)

When disaster strikes, Americans increasingly rely on their mobile phones to call 9-1-1 and to check on the well-being of those they care about. But all too often, wireless network outages in the wake of disasters leave many Americans disconnected, at precisely the time they have the greatest need to communicate. At the peak of Super Storm Sandy, for example, approximately 25 percent of cell sites in the affected region were disabled – and more than double that figure were disabled in the hardest-hit counties in New York and New Jersey. Without question, communications providers worked tirelessly in their storm ravaged areas to restore service. While some disaster-related disruptions may be inevitable, we must and can do more to prepare for future emergencies. So the question remains: what can we do to prevent such extensive wireless outages, from occurring in the first place?

Earlier this year, the Commission held field hearings to explore ways we can promote the resiliency and reliability of communications networks during disasters. We learned during Super Storm Sandy and other recent disasters that the level of cell site outages varied among wireless providers even within the same geographic area. In addition, we found that choices and practices regarding network resiliency vary among wireless service providers.

Taken together, these differences suggest that some approaches are more effective than others and that there are additional actions providers can take to improve the ability of their networks to withstand disasters and reduce service disruptions to consumers. The primary proposal in this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking does not dictate what methods wireless providers should use to harden their networks. Those decisions are best left to industry. But what would create greater transparency is information on carrier performance that, up to now, has not been publicly available. This would empower the public to hold wireless providers accountable for the results of those decisions. Specifically, we are proposing that wireless providers submit to the Commission, for public disclosure on a daily basis and immediately after major disasters, the percentage of cell sites within their networks that are operational. Providers would report this information, on a per-county basis, for the designated disaster area.

Since this data can be derived from information that providers already submit daily to the Commission, on a voluntary and presumptively confidential basis during disasters, our proposal should not impose any significant new burden on wireless providers. But our proposal could have a significant impact in other ways: making cell site outage information public, empowering consumers, and creating competitive incentives for wireless providers, to improve network resiliency during emergencies. We seek input from all stakeholders on this proposal, and many related questions.

This item builds on the Commission's existing work to improve the reliability and resiliency of the wireline communications networks that serve 9-1-1 call centers during disasters. Today, we focus on improving the reliability and resiliency of the wireless networks that are used to call 9-1-1 in the first place.

We cannot prevent disasters from happening. But we are hopeful that these actions can help keep Americans safer when emergencies do occur. I thank David Turetsky and his talented staff for crafting a thorough and well written NPRM. Again, I thank Michele Ellison and Louis Peraertz for their efforts in coordinating with the staff and my colleagues' offices on this item.