

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Improving 911 Reliability*, PS Docket No. 13-75; *Reliability and Continuity of Communications Networks, Including Broadband Technologies*, PS Docket No. 11-60.

During the Summer before last, a fast-moving storm known as a Derecho blew through the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic. These were not the usual warm winds of late June. These were gusts of up to 80 miles per hour. And they were accompanied by sheets of rain and bolts of lightning.

The damage left in the wake of the Derecho was substantial. This was Mother Nature at her most angry. We had downed trees, blocked roads, power outages—and serious failures in our communications systems.

To learn more, in the days following the Derecho I visited the 911 center in Fairfax County, Virginia. The head of Fairfax County's Department of Public Safety Communications described an eerie quiet in the aftermath of the storm, as calls into 911 quickly and implausibly ceased. He said he knew instantly something was wrong. He was right.

In fact, during the Derecho, 77 public safety answering points spanning six states lost some connectivity. This affected more than 3.6 million people. Seventeen 911 call centers lost service completely. This left more than two million people without access to 911 during and after the storm. It was many hours before the calls returned—and in some cases days. This is unacceptable. It puts the safety of too many people at risk.

So it was clear that we needed an investigation. Because when things like this happen we have to search out the facts—wherever they lead. Then we need to apply the lessons we learn. Not just in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic where the Derecho struck—but everywhere.

The staff at the Commission has done extraordinary work to understand what happened. They worked with carriers, reached out to public safety officials, and combed through lots and lots of paper. As a result, we now know that as many as nine generators failed to start, disabling hundreds of network transportation systems. We know that back-up generators and switches failed. We also know that power failures undermined network monitoring capabilities.

So we understand what did not go right. Now we are doing something about it. The rules we adopt today require 911 service providers to adopt practices for auditing circuit diversity, to supply back-up power to central offices that service 911 call centers, and to provide diverse network monitoring. We also direct providers to reach out to 911 call centers and let them know when they experience a service outage, so first responders are not left in the dark unable to do their job and help us when the unthinkable occurs.

These are simple, commonsense solutions. But they matter. Because this is not just a conversation about technical fixes. This is a conversation about real people and their safety.

I am grateful to the Chairman for making this a priority so early in his tenure. Thank you also the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for your continued diligence. Your efforts have my full support.