

**REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI  
INTRODUCING THE PANEL ON MULTILINE 911 ISSUES  
OF THE CONGRESSIONAL NEXTGEN 9-1-1 CAUCUS**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**FEBRUARY 7, 2014**

Thank you all for coming today. I'd like to start by thanking the leaders of the NG911 caucus—Congresswoman Eshoo, Congressman Shimkus, Senator Burr, and Senator Klobuchar—for their steadfast leadership on emergency response issues. I'd also like to thank all the members of the NG911 caucus for their support on matters of public safety.

At the FCC, we are currently working on several proceedings designed to make Next Generation 911 a reality. Just last week, for example, we adopted a Policy Statement and made some proposals that I hope will bring us one step closer to text-to-911 functionality. This is an exciting development—one that holds the potential to save many lives. But as we move forward with cutting-edge technologies, we can't afford to neglect the basics.

As you know, Federal law designates 911 as “the universal emergency telephone number within the United States for reporting an emergency to appropriate authorities and requesting assistance.” When Americans dial 911, they expect and deserve to reach emergency personnel who can assist them in their time of need. Unfortunately, a recent tragedy shows that this is not always the case.

On December 1, Kari Rene Hunt Dunn met her estranged husband in a Marshall, Texas hotel room so that he could visit their three children, ages nine, four, and three. During that encounter, Kari's husband forced her into the bathroom and began stabbing her. Kari's nine-year-old daughter did exactly what every child is taught to do during an emergency. She picked up the phone and dialed 911. The call didn't go through, so she tried again. And again. And again. All in all, she dialed 911 four times—but she never reached emergency personnel. Why? Because the hotel's phone system required her to dial 9 to get an outside line. Tragically, Kari died as a result of this vicious attack.

Kari's daughter behaved heroically under horrific circumstances. But the hotel's phone system failed her, her mother, and her entire family.

At first, I was shocked to hear that such a situation could exist. But when you think about it, it's probably the case in many places—hotels, motels, office buildings, and schools—that use “multiline telephone systems” or MLTS. For example, here in the Rayburn Office Building, I'm sure many people have mistakenly dialed phone numbers and were surprised when they couldn't get through to a number—until they got used to remembering the nine, the four, or other code to get an outside line. And this *could* be the case in many large buildings across the country.

But the truth of the matter is that we don't know the extent of the problem. That's why I launched an inquiry last month to gather the facts. As a first step, I sent a letter to the CEOs of the ten largest hotel chains in America. Although their responses aren't due until February 14<sup>th</sup>, we do know that they are actively working to understand how their hotel phone systems work, and if there is a problem, how it can be fixed. I am also encouraged that the American Hotel and Lodging Association, which represents nine of the top ten chains and many, many more hotels and motels, has convened an internal task force to address the issue.

So what is the issue, precisely? In the case of Kari Hunt Dunn, it was what we call the “Direct Dial” issue—whether somebody picks up on the other end if you dial 911.

But there are a couple of accompanying issues that come along with it.

First is the question of *who* should pick up the other end of the line. Should it always be someone at the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)? Or in some buildings, should it be an on-site security

office or front-desk clerk? And if the call does go to the PSAP, how does someone in the building find out that a call has been placed so that he or she can provide more immediate assistance or guide first responders to the correct room?

The second question is *location*. Do the first responders know where the call is coming from? In large office buildings or complexes, on college campuses, and in hotels, it's not enough for first responders to show up at the front door, if one even exists. Bringing accurate location information to these emergency personnel is critical. If someone calls 911 in this building, for instance, think about how long it could take EMTs to find a person in distress if they don't know exactly where to go.

There's a lot to discuss with respect to these and other 911-related issues, and we are fortunate to have with us knowledgeable panelists who will guide the discussion. I would like to thank my FCC colleague, Rear Admiral David Simpson, Chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Trey Forgety of the National Emergency Number Association; and Jeff Cohen of APCO International for sharing their expertise and suggestions.

In closing, we can't erase the tragedy that occurred in a Marshall, Texas hotel room last December. But we can work to prevent such tragedies from happening again, and that's what I am determined to do. I am confident that everyone here shares my belief that when an emergency strikes, people, whether in a house or a hotel, should be able to reach someone who can help. Let's join together to make that vision a reality.