

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications*, PS Docket No. 11-153; *Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*, PS Docket No. 10-255

Earlier this week I had the chance to help the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials mark their 80th annual conference. Speaking directly to first responders about 911 brings into sharp focus the importance of our nationwide emergency number. So does traveling around the country and talking directly to public safety officials on the front lines. I am proud to say I have been in 911 calling centers from Arkansas to Alaska, from New York to Nevada, from Colorado to California—and many, many more places in between.

Every visit is striking. Because emergency operators amaze. When crises mount and calls come tumbling in, they answer their phones with steely calm—and help ensure that help is on the way.

Every visit also reminds me that the ways we communicate are changing. It was not that long ago that emergency calls to 911 came only from landline phones. But over time, we expanded 911 service to mobile phones. We also made 911 an essential feature of interconnected VoIP service.

So times change, technology marches on, and we find new ways to bring the ways we communicate into the 911 fold.

That is what we do here today with texting. Texting, after all, has become second nature to millions of Americans, especially young people. Many of us use our phones more for texting than for speaking. We use texting to reach out to friends and family, confirm plans, vote in contests online and on the air, and donate to charities and campaigns.

That is why I support the effort today to codify policies to make sure that providers of text messages have systems capable of supporting text-to-911 service. This means that texting services that have become so essential for so many of us can be there when we reach out in crisis.

I know how critical these services can be because I know texting-to-911 can save lives. It already has in Vermont—where I had the privilege of seeing the service in action in Burlington. In addition, I know that texting-to-911 can be a game changer for those who are deaf or have speech difficulties. In fact, I had the privilege of seeing this up close in Frederick, Maryland, where the service is available and the Maryland School for the Deaf is located.

I also know that texting-to-911 can bring new complications. Because, let's be frank, voice calling still offers a speed and response that is superior to texting. As countless public safety officials have told me, it offers the ability for conversation that a drop down menu of responses to an emergency text does not. Educating the public matters. So I hope that all stakeholders work together on outreach. Because in times of crisis, we need to understand the best way to call for help.

While we look to the future with texting, there are other 911 issues that require attention. Today, more than 70 percent of 911 calls are made from wireless phones. That is more than 400,000 calls across the country every day. And this number is only going to grow. Because for roughly two in five households right now, their wireless phone is their only phone. Here in the District of Columbia that number is even larger—at one in two households.

Despite this nationwide change in calling practices, our rules that provide first responders with information about where we are when we call 911 are stranded in calling practices of the last century. They help first responders find you when you call from a landline phone. They assist first responders

with locating you when you call from a wireless phone outdoors. But if you call from a wireless phone indoors, I'd recommend you hope and pray, because no location accuracy standards apply.

This gap needs attention. Because when you call for emergency help you want first responders to find you. To close this gap, I think we should start with the four essential principles that public safety officials, equipment manufacturers, and wireless carriers have come together to support—efforts must be dispatchable, verifiable, flexible, and deployable in reasonable time. I believe this is a strong foundation for improving wireless 911 location accuracy and finally fixing this this problem.

But back to texting. ICYMI, we update our rules today, we modernize our policies, and lay the foundation for making texting-to-911 more widely available. This has my support.