

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Multistate 911 Outage Presentation* (October 17, 2014)

The first telephone number I taught my children was 911. It's a number that every one of us knows by heart but every one of us hopes we will never have to use.

On April 9 and 10, 2014, thousands of people had to call 911. But instead of reaching help at the end of the line, they got silence. Eighty-one 911 call centers spanning seven states lost service for as long as six hours. The source of this multistate 911 outage? Not a natural disaster. Not a power failure. It was a software glitch. A software glitch that put the lives and safety of 11 million Americans at risk.

I visited Washington state shortly after this outage. In Washington, all 39 of the state's 911 call centers went dark just weeks after the Oso mudslide swiftly and tragically claimed a rural community and the lives of 43 people. With this tragedy fresh in mind, people in Washington asked me repeatedly what we were doing about 911 service failures.

These failures are preventable. That's what we know now because the Commission staff has done extraordinary work to understand just what happened. They worked with carriers, reached out to public safety officials, and combed through reams of data. As a result, we know that this multistate outage was caused by a coding error. We know that this error stopped calls from being routed through the network to affected 911 call centers. And we know that because of a totally inadequate alarm system, this error was not detected for six hours—causing more than 6600 911 calls to go unanswered.

So now that we understand what went wrong, we need to do something about it. What is apparent to me is that as we transition our emergency service systems to next generation 911, essential elements of our traditional 911 network topology are changing. While a more centralized IP-based system can mean tremendous new functionality, it also can mean new vulnerabilities. The kind of software glitch we had here is just an early demonstration case. Before a worse one results—or a malicious one as part of a cyberattack—we need to get our house in order.

We need to fix this for the people of Washington state—and the six other states that suffered from this software glitch. We need to fix this for my children and all of us who have taught and been taught that 911 is the one number you need in an emergency. So I look forward to working with my colleagues here and in the states to follow up on this presentation—and help fix this problem.

