

**REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI
AT THE 12TH ANNUAL NG9-1-1 HONOR AWARDS GALA
TO CELEBRATE HEROES AND LEADERS IN 9-1-1**

WASHINGTON, DC

FEBRUARY 24, 2015

I am honored to be with you tonight at the NG9-1-1 Institute's 12th Annual Awards Gala. I would like to thank everyone at the NG9-1-1 Institute, including Chairman Jim Shepard, Vice Chairman Tim Lorello, and Executive Director Kim Scovill, for the work they do every day to promote the deployment of advanced and effective 911 systems throughout the country. We are all grateful for those efforts.

The NG9-1-1 Institute's mission includes assisting the Congressional NextGen 911 Caucus. And I would like to thank the leaders of the Caucus—Senator Burr, Senator Klobuchar, Representative Shimkus, Representative Eshoo—as well as every member of the Caucus for their steadfast leadership on emergency response issues.

We're here tonight to recognize public safety heroes and leaders for their achievements during this past year. And I would like to congratulate all of tonight's awardees, including Patti Davis; Angelia Dodd; David Furth; Hank Hunt; SNOPAC Everett, which is the 911 call center for Snohomish County, Washington; and the Denco Area 9-1-1 District, which coordinates 911 services throughout Denton County, Texas.

I have the privilege of knowing two of tonight's individual awardees personally—David Furth and Hank Hunt. David, as many of you probably know, is Deputy Bureau Chief of the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. He's a tremendous asset to the Commission. I still remember one of our first meetings, when he briefed me on NG 9-1-1 architecture. It quickly became clear to me that he'd forgotten more about public safety than I'd ever know. David's also a dedicated public servant. It's not uncommon for him to burn the midnight oil in the lead-up to an FCC vote on a public safety matter, helping ensure the FCC is well-informed. The American people are safer because of David's hard work, and his award tonight is well deserved.

One area where David and others at the FCC have made a real difference recently is wireless indoor location accuracy. As many of you know, the FCC has had location accuracy rules on the books for some time, but those rules were geared to the outdoor environment. That may have been adequate in the past, but that isn't sufficient today. Now, more and more wireless 911 calls are being placed from indoor locations—up to 70% by some estimates—and a growing number of households are cutting their landlines and going wireless only. So my colleagues and I knew we needed to act and ensure that whenever someone calls 911—whether from an indoor or outdoor location—first responders get the information they need to locate the caller. Accurate and timely location information can make all the difference in an emergency.

So with the late-night help of David and others, we adopted indoor location accuracy rules in January. We're now on a path to providing emergency responders with a "dispatchable location"—that's the room, office, or suite number where the 911 caller is located. Public safety organizations have described this as the "gold standard" for indoor location accuracy because it tells first responders exactly which door they need to knock on, or in some cases, kick in during an emergency. This is a great next step in improving our nation's 911 system. And it's one that might not have happened if APCO, NENA, and the wireless industry had not stepped up to the plate and worked collaboratively towards a solution.

But for all the improvements we hope to see in location accuracy and for all the other enhancements that NG 9-1-1 systems can offer, we need to keep something very basic in mind. Calling 911 must always work.

You see, in the U.S., we often take our 911 system for granted. But about a year ago I visited India and it reminded me how fortunate we are. In India, there isn't a single number that people can call for help. There's one number to reach the police, another for the fire department, and yet another if you need an ambulance. There are even different numbers for senior citizens, women, and children to use. I learned that many Indian households have a long list of numbers stuck on their walls and refrigerator doors to remind them which number to call for which emergency. All of this leads to needless confusion and delayed response times.

And in *most* respects, the U.S. doesn't have that problem. If you dial 911, in most circumstances you will reach emergency personnel who can help you in your time of need. But unfortunately, that isn't always the case. This brings me to another one of tonight's award winners, Hank Hunt. Before I ever met Hank, I would have assumed, just as many Americans do, that you only need to know one number in an emergency: 911. But Hank showed me why I would have been wrong.

Fourteen months ago, Hank's daughter—Kari Rene Hunt Dunn—was killed by her estranged husband in a Marshall, Texas hotel room. During the attack, Kari's nine-year-old daughter did exactly what she had been taught to do. She tried to save her mother by dialing 911. But the call didn't go through. So she tried dialing 911 again, and again, and again—each time, the same result. She was never able to reach anyone who could help because the hotel's phone system required her to first use an access code—a "9"—before dialing 911.

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

Confronted with a tragedy like this, many people would have retreated into grief. And no one would fault them for that. But Hank chose another path. He didn't want anyone else to suffer the way that his family had suffered. So he began a movement to raise awareness and to effect positive change.

After hearing his story, I had the privilege to speak with Hank. I gave him my personal commitment that I would do my best to ensure that no one would ever again confront that situation. Countless others—including Mark Fletcher, who's here tonight—did the same thing.

So we all followed Hank's heroic lead. We rolled up our sleeves and sought to do what we could to ensure that dialing 911 always works.

The small part I played was launching an inquiry to determine the scope of the problem and to encourage hotels, motels, and other buildings that use multi-line telephone systems (MLTS) to ensure that direct 911 calling works. We found that virtually every MLTS system in use today could be configured or re-configured to allow direct 911 dialing and that making the change cost little to no money. The biggest obstacle to solving this problem was a lack of awareness.

Last month, I had the chance to visit Marshall, Texas and the 911 dispatch center where the call from Kari's daughter would have—and should have—gone. I was honored to stand with Hank—someone whose courage, fortitude, and determination is humbling and inspiring. And I was pleased to report on the progress that's been made towards fixing this problem in just one year's time.¹

Tonight, I want to take a minute to highlight just some of the progress that's been made because I think it's a testament to Hank and why he's rightly honored tonight for his passion and commitment to

¹ See Remarks of FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai on Connecting Americans to Emergency Personnel Whenever They Dial 911 (Jan. 23, 2015), <http://go.usa.gov/SQ5k>; see also Summary of FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai's Report on the Progress Being Made to Ensure that Dialing 911 Always Works (Jan. 23, 2015), <http://go.usa.gov/SQ5P>.

911 advocacy. Simply by raising awareness, we are now on track to have solved this problem by the end of the year at all Country Inn & Suites, Crowne Plaza, Doubletree, Embassy Suites, Fairfield Inn, Four Points, Gaylord, Hampton Inn, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Hyatt, InterContinental, La Quinta, Marriott, Motel 6, Park Plaza, Radisson, Residence Inn, Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, Sheraton, Staybridge, W, and Westin properties. That's real progress. Think of how many Americans will check into rooms at these hotels tonight and sleep soundly, never knowing that Hank's cause made them safer.

Manufacturers and vendors of multi-line telephone systems (MLTS) have also stepped up to the plate. Today, half of surveyed vendors ship all of their MLTS products with a default setting of direct 911 dialing, and all of them recommend that their products be set up to allow for direct 911 dialing.

It's been an honor to work alongside Hank, Mark Fletcher, the American Hotel & Lodging Association, NENA, and many others.

And while there's certainly more to be done on this and other 911 issues, all of tonight's awardees are proof that much can be accomplished when we roll up our sleeves and get to work. So again: congratulations to all of you, thank you for your leadership on 911 issues, and thank you for inspiring all of us to continue working to advance public safety.