

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER**

Re: *Improving Outage Reporting for Submarine Cables and Enhancing Submarine Cable Outage Data*,
GN Docket No. 15-206

Today's communications networks are the foundation of our modern economy and vital platforms for innovation, free expression, and civic engagement. Every day, we rely on these networks, and that's why these networks must be reliable. Today, the Commission moves to enhance the security and reliability of a key piece of the Internet's physical infrastructure: undersea cables.

There are approximately 60 submarine -- or "undersea" -- cables that provide connectivity between the mainland U.S. and the people of Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In addition, these cables carry more than 95 percent of all U.S. international voice, data, and Internet traffic. Without undersea cables, the U.S. would be practically cut off from the global digital economy.

Although damage to these cables is rare, it does happen, and it can have serious consequences. This summer, there was a break in an undersea cable near the Northern Marianas, which left tens of thousands of residents suffering a communications blackout for more than 48 hours. Not only were residents unable to send emails or make phone calls, their banking system shut down, leaving people unable to make credit card transactions or withdraw money from an ATM.

Modern communications networks are increasingly interconnected. The failure of a single cable can have a ripple effect on multiple networks, which could adversely impact our economy and national security.

Like the overwhelming majority of the nation's broadband infrastructure, these cables are privately owned. Unlike other communications providers, the owners and operators of undersea cables are *not* required to report outages to the FCC's Network Outage Reporting System (NORS). Licensees currently only report outages on an ad hoc basis, and the information that we receive is too limited to be of use.

The data we collect from NORS gives us situational awareness that has allowed us to analyze outage trends and recommend solutions to make these networks more resilient and reliable. We should do the same for these undersea cables.

Today's, NPRM proposes that we require submarine cable licensees to report significant outages in appropriate detail through NORS. Robust reporting on submarine cable outages will improve the FCC's ability to understand the nature and impact of any damage and disruption to communications, help mitigate any impact on emergency services and consumers, and assist in service restoration. Long-term, better reporting about the status of undersea cables will help us better anticipate and prevent disruptions to service.

This is just the latest effort by the Commission to improve the resiliency and reliability of our networks. Just last month, we adopted rules to give consumers the tools and information necessary to access backup power and maintain home landline service during electric outages. Previously we moved to address the recent trend of "sunny day" 911 outages, which stem from the increasingly complex nature of the nation's 911 infrastructure and respond.

Assuring the reliability of our networks is one of the Commission's most important responsibilities. Thank you to the staff of the Public Safety Bureau for their work on this item and all they do to maintain reliable communications.