

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

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

Imagine being on an island in the South Pacific, surrounded by two other inhabited islands, with just over 52,000 family, friends and neighbors during the week following July 4<sup>th</sup>. Sounds almost tranquil, until you learn that tropical storm damage and a severed cable would, for nearly three weeks, leave residents with no or limited off-island wireless, wireline, voice and data communications, and commercial services.

To add insult to injury, for those of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, is the fact that the agency responsible for “ensuring continuous communications operations”... the agency mandated to “ensure the resiliency and reliability of the nation’s commercial and public communications infrastructure...” only learned of their plight through indirect channels.

Even if we had directly learned about the outage, the Commission soon realized that it faced another stumbling block. It had no reliable owner and operator contact numbers, no information about the outage impact or restoration developments, leaving staff at a severe disadvantage in any effort to help restore critical services.

Most Americans are unaware that more than 95 percent of all U.S. international voice, data, and Internet traffic, travels over submarine cables. Not only do they provide critical communications services, these cables also carry the vast majority of U.S. Government traffic from civilian and military personnel stationed overseas, because our government does not own and operate its own submarine cables.

Given their importance to international communications, one might expect that our rules require licensees to report when outages occur. They do not. Since 2008, licensees have only provided operational information on a voluntary, ad hoc basis, through something called the Undersea Cable Information System.

Now I will be among the first to push for light touch, regulatory approaches when they work well and where licensees act responsibly. But what happened on Northern Mariana shows, the current voluntary, ad hoc framework, has not served the public interest well. The majority of the undersea cable licensees, that is 62, have not cooperated by providing useful information. And since 2010, the FCC has received information on only 14 of them. Informally, several licensees have made it clear to staff that they will not participate in the voluntary UCIS system and after filing initial test messages when it was first introduced, the majority of licensees have stopped reporting into the system.

So I commend Chairman Wheeler, Admiral Simpson, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau and the International Bureau for their leadership on this issue and specially thank Theo Marcus and Mike Saperstein for this excellent presentation.

The Commission needs timely and consistent reporting of outages of submarine cables to address systemic issues and ensure that consumers get the services they need. This item promises to get us closer in realizing this important objective.