

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER**

Re: Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System (PS Docket No. 15-94) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (PS Docket No. 15-91).

This past weekend's historic winter storm reminded us how much we rely on broadcasters and other TV providers to keep us informed during emergencies. Today, we move to strengthen one of the most important tools broadcast, cable, and satellite providers use to keep the public safe in times of crisis: the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

The Emergency Alert System is our national public warning system. We most often associate the EAS with severe weather warnings. But in recent months we've seen attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, and other locations that remind us of the many scenarios where community preparedness and incident response tools are vital.

Technology is evolving, which presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the EAS. We not only need to ensure that Americans continue to reliably receive alerts, but we also have the chance to make alerting even more valuable to the public. Today's item lays the groundwork to do just that.

First, we are taking steps to improve some of our existing processes. Most notably, given that state and local authorities are instrumental in emergency response efforts, we are proposing rule changes and seeking input to empower communities to take fuller advantage of alerting to meet the needs of their residents.

We are also beginning an important dialogue with stakeholders about the future of alerting. For example, as Americans increasingly view programming over new platforms, how can we ensure that the public still receives critical warnings when disaster strikes? How can we responsibly leverage social media techniques, like crowdsourcing, for sharing information as crises unfold?

Today's item is part of our broader agenda to ensure that emergency communications best leverage advancements in technology. For example, in November we put forth proposals to improve the Wireless Emergency Alert system, which sends life-saving warnings to our mobile devices. And we are working on many fronts to modernize 911 communications and accelerate the transition to Next Generation 911.

One of the greatest benefits of technology is its potential to improve public safety. This NPRM will help us promote better community preparedness and ensure that Americans are best served by the warnings and alerts they receive during emergencies.

Thank you to the Public Safety Bureau for their work on this item.