

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER

Re: Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications, PS Docket No. 15-80, ET Docket No. 04-35, PS Docket No. 11-82, Report and Order, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Order on Reconsideration.

Albert Einstein once said, "The only source of knowledge is experience." By Einstein's logic, the only way to know how best to ensure the reliability of our communications networks is to understand what happens when these networks fail. That is why the Commission is moving today to update our network outage reporting requirements.

Public safety is one of the enduring values that has always guided the Commission's policymaking, going back to our founding statute's call to promote "the safety of life and property." To that end, the Commission has worked to promote resilient, reliable, and secure communications networks across America. A key part of this effort has been our network outage reporting rules and the associated Network Outage Reporting System, or NORS.

For more than a decade, communications providers have kept the FCC apprised of major disruptions in their networks through these reporting requirements. The data have allowed staff to detect adverse outage trends, support providers' service restoration efforts, and coordinate with public safety officials during times of crisis. Information on so-called "sunny day" communications disruptions can also signal potentially deeper communications network problems. On the whole, these reports provide the FCC with a unique industry-wide view into communications outages that enables us to help make networks more reliable. This becomes even more important as critical infrastructure services rely increasingly on interconnected communications networks.

As technology evolves, our network outage reporting program must keep pace. In 2012, the Commission updated our rules to include outage reporting from interconnected VoIP providers. Still, the reporting requirements were adopted in an analog era and remain tailored primarily to legacy networks. This leaves us with two tasks: to bring legacy network reporting into today's digital era and to lay the groundwork for the broadband world. For example, 911 services are already increasingly reliant on IP-networks and transitioning to broadband-enabled Next Generation 911. Unless we update our rules, we risk losing critical visibility into the status of emergency communications in America. That is why in March 2015, the Commission approved a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to explore additional updates to reflect new technologies.

Today's item adopts many of the proposals in the 2015 NPRM, refining our network outage reporting requirements to reflect the digital nature of today's networks and proposing common-sense updates in light of the transition to IP-based networks. The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking initiates a dialogue and seeks comment on ways to keep our reporting requirements current, whether for outages to emergency or non-emergency communications, so that we can continue to collectively safeguard the networks that American consumers and businesses rely upon.

Reviewing and, where appropriate, updating our rules to make sure they are keeping pace with technological advances and changing consumer preferences has been an agency-wide priority for the past several years. When the stakes are potentially life and death, as they are with public safety, it's imperative that we do so with our outage reporting rules. By helping us to learn from the experience of network disruptions, today's Order will help us know better how to make sure our networks are secure and reliable.

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