

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Wireless Emergency Alerts*, PS Docket No. 15-91; *Amendments to Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System*, PS Docket No. 15-94.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) save lives. From a National Weather Service warning about an approaching hurricane, to AMBER alerts that bring a child home safely, emergency managers have sent more than 33,000 alerts aimed at keeping the public safe.

But an ineffective WEA system is no system at all. If emergency managers cannot count on the system to deliver their messages on-time and to the intended area—or if the public loses trust in WEAs' reliability—officials and the public will opt out. And a system that delivers few alerts to a dwindling audience becomes an afterthought rather than a life-saving tool.

Recent events in California and Hawaii remind us of the urgency of improving WEA. The massive wildfires that swept through Northern California in October caused the evacuation of tens of thousands of residents. The WEA system was designed for precisely this sort of situation: when lives and property are at stake, when a large number of Americans need to receive instructions, and when time is of the essence. Yet there are reports that officials in California chose not to use WEA because it lacks precise targeting. They feared the unintended consequences of alerting too many residents to evacuate.

We all have heard stories of the unthinkable panic that the people of Hawaii faced on the morning of January 13th. Many Hawaiian residents thought that their lives and the lives of their loved ones were at risk. It appears now that a series of errors caused those 38 minutes of confusion and fear. I commend the Chairman and the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for immediately initiating an investigation into what went wrong in Hawaii. Whatever the cause, the false alert was inexcusable and unacceptable, and I am eager to continue exercising our oversight responsibility over the system.

Our experience with WEA over the last five years, and the significant submissions from the public safety community in the record, support the Commission's actions today. We now require that WEAs match the message originator's target area, to reduce the likelihood of overwarning and warning fatigue. We require that messages be preserved for 24 hours so that the public can review and share alerts after they have been sent. And we provide guidance on how legacy networks and devices can continue to comply with our rules.

In selecting the new deadlines, the Commission has attempted to balance the urgency we all feel to improve the WEA system with the speed at which the technology and standards are developing. I am confident that the Commission will continue to work with all stakeholders on implementing these upgrades and do so based on the recognition that working quickly and effectively together will save lives.

So thank you to the staff of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for all of your work on this item. I am pleased to support it.