

**REMARKS OF
PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY BUREAU CHIEF LISA M. FOWLKES
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**“911 GOES TO WASHINGTON”
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Introduction

Thank you so much for that kind introduction, Brian Fontes, and thank you, Rob McMullen, for your leadership as NENA President in 2018. And thanks to all of you in the audience for taking the time to come to Washington. It’s an honor for me to have the opportunity to speak to you, but even more important is that my FCC colleagues and I have the opportunity to learn from you.

I see many familiar faces here but am also meeting some of you for the first time. To help our introduction, I’ll tell you a few things about me.

First, I am a proud native of Philadelphia and a proud Eagles fan. But don’t worry, I won’t gloat about the Super Bowl. (Fly, Eagles, fly!)

Second, like you, I have a passion for public safety. During most of my nearly three decades at the FCC, as technology has evolved rapidly, I’ve had the privilege of working to help ensure that those advancements promote public safety. I have served in the FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau since its establishment in 2006, overseeing our work on network reliability and emergency alerting.

So, third: I know the importance of the job that *you* do, working on the front lines to keep our communities safe. The dedicated professionals who answer our 911 calls are truly the “First of the First Responders,” the first critical link to ensuring that a person in an emergency can get the help that he or she needs.

I will begin by noting that it has been an incredible, and incredibly busy, 13 months since I became bureau chief. I am honored that Chairman Pai entrusted this responsibility to me, and I expected things to be busy, but not THIS busy. Who could have anticipated 13 months ago that we would have to deal with:

- Four hurricanes inflicting major damage on Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Wildfires and mudslides in California.
- A major 911 outage affecting a nationwide carrier.
- An erroneous missile alert in Hawaii.

The good news is that I have a great team backing me up: the staff of the Bureau. They are talented and dedicated, and time after time, they have stepped up and met every challenge thrown at them.

Today I will recap for you some of the actions we have taken in the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau and what lies ahead for this year.

911 Reliability

While it is critical that all 911 calls go through, that's not always the case. A prime example occurred last March 8, when AT&T Mobility experienced a nationwide 911 outage affecting its Voice over LTE customers. Over a five-hour period, more than 12,000 individual callers were unable to reach 911. This was one of the largest 911 outages ever reported to the Commission, and a matter that we took extremely seriously

Immediately after the outage occurred, Chairman Pai directed the Bureau to conduct a thorough review of the causes, effects, and implications of that outage, and to come up with lessons learned and recommendations on how to reduce the risk of such outages in the future. Many of you here today helped us in that investigation by providing your comments and insights. We also held a highly productive workshop on enhancing PSAP situational awareness during 911 outages that some of you participated in.

And what have we learned? Among other things, we have learned, once again, the critical importance of developing and applying network reliability best practices, which could have prevented or lessened the impact of this outage. The outage also revealed the need for closer coordination between service providers and 911 call centers during outages.

We are committed to working with the 911 community, industry, and other stakeholders to apply these lessons learned. Last month, we issued a public notice highlighting the recommended practices that received broad support from workshop participants. We encourage you to review it and to help spread the word about these recommendations. And if you think there's more that needs to be done, we want to hear from you.

Supporting Emergency Communications During Disasters

Last year's hurricane season was particularly devastating, with an unprecedented four major hurricanes making landfall in the United States and its territories. As is always the case, when disaster strikes, 911 was – sometimes literally – in the eye of the storm. PSAPs in the affected areas experienced flooding, power outages, and huge surges in 911 call volume, and 911 professionals worked around the clock to serve their communities and help those in need.

The Bureau and the FCC also worked tirelessly to assist in these efforts, both here in Washington and in the field.

- Our 24/7 FCC Operations Center handled numerous inquiries and requests for assistance from consumers, industry, and government entities.
- We granted over 200 STAs and issued over 30 public notices and orders to support incident response and recovery.

- Through our Disaster Information Reporting System, we generated detailed daily outage reports for each of the four hurricanes, which provided valuable information to recovery agencies and to the public.
- We dispatched Bureau personnel to the field to assist with restoring communications after the storms.

While the 2017 hurricane season is behind us, recovery efforts – particularly in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands – are ongoing. As the Commission works to support communications service restoration in areas hard-hit by the storms, we are also assessing what lessons may be learned from this experience and applied to future emergencies.

That’s why we issued a Public Notice seeking comment on the government and communications industry’s preparation for and response to the 2017 hurricane season, including what worked and areas for improving service availability and restoration during disasters. We want to hear from all stakeholders, including the 911 community. Your input can help us build on successful approaches and develop options to address shortfalls as we prepare for future disasters. We are also considering what additional steps will assist this process.

911 in Enterprise Communications Systems (ECS)

Every American has the right to expect that a 911 call made from anywhere in the country will be routed to the appropriate 911 call center and that the call center will receive location information that is accurate and precise enough for emergency personnel to find you.

Yet that’s not always the case when the public calls 911 from enterprise-based phone systems that are installed in many office buildings, campuses, and hotels. Unfortunately, these systems do not always support direct 911 dialing, and even when the 911 call goes through, it may not go to the nearest 911 call center, or it may lack accurate location information.

There is good news, though, on a couple of fronts. First, Kari’s Law is on the verge of being law. This legislation will require enterprise systems to support direct 911 dialing without a prefix. As you know, Chairman Pai has been a strong advocate for Kari’s Law, and the same is true for NENA.

Second, last September, the Commission issued a Notice of Inquiry to identify the reasons that 911 capabilities of enterprise systems appear to be lagging, and to identify potential solutions. We want to be sure that enterprise 911 systems keep pace with technological developments and public expectations. The Notice also seeks comment on the best means to achieve this goal, whether through best practices, industry standards, regulatory action, or a combination of approaches. We have gotten great feedback on this Notice from NENA and its members, and we will be looking at next steps soon.

Location Accuracy

Turning to wireless location accuracy, it was just over three years ago that the Commission adopted sweeping new rules to improve the location accuracy of wireless 911 calls, particularly from indoor environments. The order was a milestone achievement, and now we are seeing real progress towards the milestones it established.

- The location technology test bed has progressed through several rounds of testing, including deployed carrier technologies and new technology solutions.

- Development of the National Emergency Address Database is under way, which will derive information from fixed indoor access points to provide dispatchable location of wireless devices being used to call 911.
- Another milestone is coming that may have seemed far away when the order was adopted but now isn't so far away: In August, the major wireless carriers must submit a proposed z-axis metric for the Commission's consideration. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed metric, after which the Commission will decide on a final z-axis standard that the carriers must meet.

While the technical details of these rules may seem very "in the weeds," they are having an impact, and their impact will increase over time. It's also important to remember that the rules set the floor, not the ceiling. We encourage the public safety community to work with industry to make 911 location even better, and we are ready to be partners in that effort.

Next Generation 911

Finally, a word about Next Generation 911. We know that for the 911 community, there is no more important goal than achieving the transition from legacy to NG911. We are also well aware of the challenges you face getting there, including technical, operational, and funding challenges. The Commission and the Bureau have long been partners with the 911 community in this effort, through such initiatives as CSRIC, our Task Force on PSAP Architecture, and our reports to Congress.

Last week, we released our most recent annual report to Congress on 911 fees, which shows that tangible progress is being made towards NG911 implementation, but that there is still a long way to go and that in too many communities, 911 fee diversion remains a drag on progress. We have sought comment on the report and welcome your input on whether further steps can be taken to discourage fee diversion.

We are also continuing to provide technical support for the NG911 transition. Later this year, CSRIC, will be providing reports and recommendations to the Commission on two aspects of the transition path to NG911:

- First, CSRIC's Working Group 1 will report on ways to enhance the reliability of NG911 networks against the threat of outages.
- Second, Working Group 1 will report on steps that small carriers need to take to be ready to deliver their 911 traffic to ESINets in an NG911-compatible manner

Beyond these initiatives, we remain committed to partnering with you, and we encourage you to come to us when you encounter barriers to the NG911 transition that you believe the Commission can help address.

Conclusion

In closing, I'd like to thank you again for inviting me, and thank you for the work you do to protect our communities and the nation. Enjoy your time in Washington!