

Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau
Commission Open Meeting Presentation
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners.

Over the past four years, this Commission, and the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, have taken significant actions to make the public and our communications networks safer and more secure. We have strengthened the nation's 911 systems; enhanced emergency alerting; reduced the vulnerability of our communications infrastructure to national security threats; bolstered network resiliency; and supported preparedness, response, and recovery efforts for an unfortunately large number of natural disasters.

911 [SLIDE 2]

I'd like to begin with some of our extensive efforts to improve our 911 systems. We adopted rules that will help first responders determine the floor level of wireless 911 callers in multistory buildings—an action supported by a broad cross-section of public safety groups.

We rejected calls to weaken the new rules and instead built upon them so that the benefits of vertical location accuracy will ultimately reach all Americans, not just those in the largest markets.

We enacted rules under Kari's Law to help ensure that people who call 911 from multi-line telephone systems—which commonly serve hotels, office buildings, and campuses—can reach 911 directly and be more quickly located by first responders.

We adopted rules to help ensure that “dispatchable location” information—such as the street address, floor level, and room number of a 911 caller—is conveyed with 911 calls, regardless of the technological platform used.

We also issued annual reports to shine a spotlight on 911 fee diversion—that is, the practice by some states and jurisdictions of using the 911 fees collected on consumer phone bills for non-911 purposes. We then launched a proceeding on how to combat this problem and help ensure that the funding is used as intended to support our nation's 911 call centers.

Emergency Alerting [SLIDE 3]

Over the past four years, we have also made significant improvements to the nation's emergency alerting systems.

The Commission adopted rules to improve the geographic targeting of Wireless Emergency Alerts, which will help ensure that these life-saving warnings reach all—and only—those in affected communities. This will, in turn, promote greater confidence in, and use of, the system to save lives.

We adopted a dedicated Blue Alert code so that state and local agencies can notify the public of threats to law enforcement and seek information to help them apprehend dangerous suspects.

We worked with FEMA to conduct three nationwide emergency alerting tests, including the first-ever nationwide test of Wireless Emergency Alerts.

In the wake of Hawaii's false ballistic missile alert, we conducted an investigation and issued a report with recommendations to help guard against future false alerts. We also issued rules to help prevent future false alerts, as well as to promote more effective local emergency alert tests and public service announcements.

And we hosted a public workshop to promote the use of multilingual emergency alerting and other methods for delivering emergency information to the non-English-speakers.

Emergency Preparedness and Response [SLIDE 4]

The past four years have also been extremely busy for our emergency preparedness and response operations, whether in connection with natural disasters, like hurricanes and wildfires, or in support of annual events like the Presidential State of the Union Address or Super Bowl.

When disasters struck, we activated our Disaster Information Reporting System to monitor the status of communications services and support restoration efforts. We did this for Hurricanes Zeta, Delta, Sally, Laura, Isaias, Harvey, Irma, Maria, Michael, Florence, and Dorian; a derecho in the Midwest; power shutoffs in California; and earthquakes in Puerto Rico.

We also supported communications service restoration and conducted after-incident investigations.

With Hurricane Maria alone, the Commission issued 1,031 grants of special temporary authority and 23 waivers, processed 257 Requests for Assistance or Information, and provided \$116 million in immediate and short-term restoration support in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

We hosted a workshop to determine the information needs of the disabilities community, as well as Federal and State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial stakeholders, during disasters, and proposed rules to share outage information with states to support recovery efforts

Most recently, we worked closely with affected providers to monitor the service-wide outage resulting from the Nashville Christmas Day bombing.

And the FCC Operations Center has also helped emergency management and public safety personnel to save lives directly. For example, our watch officers coordinated the rescue of a crew member aboard a Chinese Research vessel off the Alaskan coast; assisted the search for a missing aircraft in Texas; and provided vital technical assistance enabling a Florida Police Department to locate a dangerous and suicidal suspect. Even throughout this pandemic, our Operations Center remained open 24/7 to fulfill its life-saving mission.

Reliability [SLIDE 5]

We have been focused day-in and day-out on promoting the integrity and reliability of our nation's communications networks, including monitoring outage trends through our Network Outage Reporting System.

We investigated major network outages—including an AT&T Mobility outage in 2017, a CenturyLink outage in December 2019, and a T-Mobile outage in June 2020—and released public reports with lessons learned to help prevent similar outages from occurring in the future.

We improved the outage reporting obligations of submarine cable licensees to better promote national security while streamlining the reporting process.

We promoted the security, reliability, and resiliency of the Nation's communications systems through the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (or CSRIC), which, among many efforts, developed best practices to ensure the security of 5G and 911 networks, as well as mitigate security risks to legacy networks.

National Security

In support of our national security mission, the Bureau designated Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE as national security threats, which bars Universal Service Funds from being used to purchase or maintain their equipment or services.

Spectrum [SLIDE 6]

Our Bureau's licensing staff have also ably handled spectrum licensing for our public safety constituents. From January 23, 2017 through the end of last year, the licensing staff processed a staggering 138,660 applications.

We also expedited the completion of the 800 MHz rebanding program by streamlining our processes and resolving issues with Mexico.

Innovation in Development and Management [SLIDE 7]

While many of our efforts are public, the behind-the-scenes work the Bureau has done to promote the development of our professional staff also deserves its moment in the sun.

The Bureau has spearheaded professional development programs to include expert panels, substantive and skill-based training, a mentoring program, and leadership forums. Employees from other Bureaus/Offices have often participated in these programs.

Our analytics teams developed innovative remote internship programs to bring unique skill sets and out-of-the-box thinking to the Bureau. The Bureau enlisted 36 remote data science and national security interns from around the country to collaborate with Bureau staff on innovative projects with the support of mentors in the Bureau.

Conclusion [SLIDE 7]

In sum, it has been my privilege to serve as the head of the Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau over the past four years. Thank you, Chairman Pai, for your leadership as we made these accomplishments. We are grateful for the trust you placed in our dedicated public safety team. I thank the Bureau's extraordinary staff for their work, and the all Chairman and Commissioners for their support of our efforts.