

**STATEMENT OF
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System; Wireless Emergency Alerts*, PS Docket Nos. 15-94, 15-91, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Notice of Inquiry (March 17, 2021)

It may feel like a lifetime ago, but back in January 2018 the people of Hawaii woke to ominous messages flashing on their mobile phones. The same messages lit up their television screens, boomed out from radio stations, and streamed in from social media. They directed all who saw and heard to seek immediate shelter due to a ballistic missile threat. They included the haunting words: "This is not a drill."

But it was. In fact, it was a false missile alert that went horribly wrong. It caused fear and panic throughout a state keenly aware of history and the threats associated with its place in the Pacific.

Later that year, I testified at a United States Senate field hearing in Honolulu that was led by Senator Schatz to investigate what went wrong with this false missile alert and identify ways to make it right. It was a productive effort. I was able to join the Director of Operations of United States Pacific Command, the leadership of the Hawaii Department of Defense, and other public safety officials to offer ideas about how we can prevent a false alert like this from ever happening again.

I put forth two ideas in my testimony. First, I suggested that we set up a system for reporting false alerts, so we can learn from our errors going forward. Second, I suggested that we use the filing of State Emergency Alert System plans at this agency to promote best practices and halt the problems that we saw in Hawaii.

This is important because as it turns out, this false alert exposed some very real problems in the ways that Americans receive emergency alerts. When it went out across Hawaii, some people never got the message on their phones. Others missed it on their televisions and radios. And of course, there was the troubling fact that this even happened in the first place.

So I am pleased that today the Federal Communications Commission will begin to implement the READI Act to help fix these problems. The goal here is making sure that in an emergency the public gets the accurate information it needs as quickly as possible. To this end, we propose rules to ensure that mobile devices cannot opt-out of receiving Wireless Emergency Alerts from the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. We also seek to develop ideas to ensure that states review and update their Emergency Alert Plans and that additional stakeholders can report false alerts to the FCC. In addition, we begin an inquiry—as the law requires—to study internet-based alerting efforts.

This action is timely. According to FEMA, our reliance on Wireless Emergency Alerts has increased by almost 300 percent in the last year, thanks largely to the ongoing pandemic. And if you are thinking that what happened in Hawaii can't happen again, just two weeks ago a false alert went out across Kansas and Missouri warning of "imminent extreme danger" from a tornado. So we have work to do.

Thank you to the staff who worked on this item. From the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau that's Steve Carpenter, Christina Clearwater, Chris Fedeli, Lisa Fowlkes, Nikki McGinnis, Dave Munson, Austin Randazzo, Renee Roland, Rasoul Safavian, and James Wiley. From the Office of General Counsel that's David Horowitz, Andrea Kearney, Bill Richardson, and Anjali Singh. From the Office of Economics and Analytics that's Chuck Needy and Emily Talaga. From the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau that's Kari Hicks and from the Wireline Competition Bureau that's Pamela Arluk and Kirk Burgee. From the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau a thank you to Zac Champ and Greg Cooke. From the Media Bureau a thank you to Hillary DeNigro and Evan Morris and from the Enforcement Bureau a thank you to Shannon Lipp, Jeremy Marcus, and Ashley Tyson. Last but not least, from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities thank you to Chana Wilkerson and Sanford Williams.