

**STATEMENT OF
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Improving 911 Reliability*, PS Docket No. 13-75; *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80; *New Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, ET Docket No. 04-35, Third Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (April 22, 2021)

In April of 2014 we had a major 911 failure in the United States. More than 6,000 emergency calls went unanswered because of a multistate system outage that affected more than 11 million people across seven states—Washington, North Carolina, South Carolina, Minnesota, California, Florida, and Pennsylvania. In a report investigating what caused the outage, the Federal Communications Commission had chilling words. It concluded: “[This] could have been prevented. But it was not.”

Those are words you never want to see twice in a report about public safety. But here’s the most striking part. According to the report, the outage was caused by a software coding error that the FCC found could have been fixed almost as soon as the outage began. But because the problems were not identified quickly, the outage went on and on . . . for six hours.

This month marks the seventh anniversary of this 911 failure that spanned seven states. In the intervening years, 911 outages have become far too common. A nationwide outage of more than 12 hours last summer resulted in more than 23,000 calls to 911 not reaching emergency call centers. Last fall, 911 services went down again in 14 states, some for as long as an hour and a half. To make matters worse, these kinds of outages have outsized consequences during the public health crisis caused by COVID-19.

Seven years is too long. So today we continue FCC efforts to update public safety protocols for the COVID-19 era by improving our ability to learn about 911 outages, identify their causes, and hold parties accountable. We propose updates to our rules so that we no longer have different reporting requirements for different providers offering 911 services. That’s because it doesn’t matter if you are on the calling or receiving end of an emergency call, an outage is a problem that needs to be fixed.

In addition to harmonizing reporting, this rulemaking proposes standardizing the information that carriers share with 911 call centers, to provide certainty and clarity when public safety needs it most. It also proposes that carriers take steps to notify their customers when there is an outage affecting the availability of 911 services.

This is important because when it comes to 911, acting quickly matters. Getting information in a fast and consistent fashion can help restore services, save lives, and prevent outages in the future. These proposals are especially important now, because we are on the cusp of change with Next Generation 911, which will provide new ways of interacting with emergency services and engineering the network that delivers 911 calls. As this transition takes place having consistency and transparency in 911 outage reporting nationwide is essential.

A big thank you to the staff that worked on this rulemaking. They include Jay Bennett, Emily Caditz, Rochelle Cohen, John Evanoff, Beau Finley, David Furth, Jennifer Holtz, Kathleen Hom, Bill Kang, Nikki McGinnis, Erika Olsen, Austin Randazzo, Avery Roselle, Jerry Stanshine, Julia Tu, and James Wiley from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Patrick Brogan, Ginny Matello, Kate Matraves, Chuck Needy, Emily Talaga, and Aleks Yankelevich from the Office of Economics and Analytics; David Horowitz, Joel Rabinovitz, Bill Richardson, and Anjali Singh from the Office of General Counsel; Chris Killion, Joann Lucanik, Jeremy Marcus, Elizabeth Mumaw, and Ashley Tyson from the Enforcement Bureau; Aaron Garza, David Sieradzki, and Mark Stone from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; and Chana Wilkerson and Sanford Williams from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.