

**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, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (June 17, 2021)

The Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts are both critical parts of our communications infrastructure. With their familiar beep and buzz, they alert us to information we need to stay safe. And they reach us wherever we are—in front of the television, listening to the radio in the car, and wherever we wander with our wireless devices.

When alerts work well, we get the facts we require in an emergency. But when they fail, they can cause fear and confusion and even panic. That was the experience on January 13, 2018, when the people of Hawaii woke up to an emergency alert warning of a ballistic missile threat. They were told to seek immediate shelter. At the end, the alert contained the ominous words: “This is not a drill.”

But as we know now, it was a drill. In fact, it was false alert that went horribly, terribly wrong. So in testimony before a United States Senate field hearing later that year, I put forward two ideas to help prevent a false alert like this from happening again. 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 communications plans at the Federal Communications Commission to promote best practices and help prevent the kind of situation that we saw in Hawaii.

Today we make these improvements and others, too. As directed by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, we adopt rules that will help ensure that more people receive critical emergency information by eliminating the option to opt-out of certain federal alerts. We require that state emergency communications plans filed at the FCC are reviewed and revised on a regular basis. We also make it possible to report false alerts and provide repeating alerts when they come from the President or the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

This is progress. But there is still more to do. With hurricane and wildfire season upon us, along with the lingering challenges from the pandemic, we are going to be relying on emergency alert systems more than ever before. So today we are kicking off a rulemaking to discuss additional ways we can improve alerting, based on recommendations from our colleagues at FEMA. On top of that, on August 11 we will hold a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts to develop further insights about how we can improve these life-saving systems.

Thank you to the staff who worked on this effort, including Bill Andrlle, Steve Carpenter, Christina Clearwater, Chris Fedeli, Lisa Fowlkes, Nikki McGinnis, Dave Munson, Austin Randazzo, Renee Roland, and Rasoul Safavian from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; David Horowitz, Bill Richardson, and Anjali Singh from the Office of General Counsel; Patrick Brogan, Eugene Kiselev, Virginia Metallo, Chuck Needy, and Emily Talaga from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Kari Hicks and Charles Mathias from the Wireless

Telecommunications Bureau; Kirk Burgee from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Aaron Garza, Gregory Haledjian, Debra Patkin, and Suzy Singleton from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Hillary DeNigro and Evan Morris from the Media Bureau; Jeffrey Gee, Shannon Lipp, Jeremy Marcus, Phillip Rosario, Christopher Sova, Raphael Sznajder, and Ashley Tyson from the Enforcement Bureau; and Sanford Williams and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.