

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Resilient Networks*, PS Docket No. 21-346; *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 (September 30, 2021)

This week, I had the opportunity to travel to Louisiana with Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel—a state that was hit hard by Hurricane Ida. I appreciated the chance to join the Chair on this visit because it allowed us to hear directly from community leaders, public safety officials, and communications providers that are engaged in the ongoing recovery and restoration efforts.

At the Louisiana State Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge, we met with members of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Travis Johnson—the head of interoperability initiatives—told us that when service to a 911 center that served a coastal parish went down, the calls started rolling over to his group's administrative line in Baton Rouge. When those calls started ringing in, he gathered some pens and paper and had his team start writing down the pleas for help. He read some of those shorthand notes to us: *Water in house, stuck in attic. Need help.* Another read: *Roof off house. Kids ages three and six in home.* Then, shortly after 10:00 PM, the flurry of calls just stopped. No more calls for help—just silence. The Emergency Operations Center still had connectivity, but cellular service in that coastal area was lost. There was no longer any way for those people in need to call for help.

At the same time, we heard stories about networks and call centers that remained resilient, stayed online, and absorbed the worst of Hurricane Ida's punch. In Livingston, Louisiana, we met with Captain Jack Varnado and his team at the area's 911 call center. Captain Varnado and a few others rode out the storm at their reinforced facility, which he noted swayed, creaked, and even leaked a little under the pressure of 100+ miles per hour winds. That call center maintained internet service during the entire storm, even though they lost telephone service for a time.

Further south in Raceland, where homes with blue tarps covering their upper floors seemed to outnumber those with intact roofs, we connected with some of the FirstNet team members that surged support and bolstered connectivity in the area. They brought in COLTs, COWs, and dirigibles to serve neighborhoods and parts of communities where terrestrial service had been knocked out.

To put this storm in context, one of the power companies said they lost about 30,000 utility poles due to Ida, which was more than the number of poles lost in Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, Delta and Zeta combined. At the same time, the telecom network showed increased resiliency. While we saw 38 different 911 call centers lose service across the Gulf Coast area during Katrina, early reports indicate that the number dropped to four in Louisiana this time around.

But the reality is that we can and must do much better. The most important calls in emergencies are the ones to 911. That network needs to be robust and resilient, and its not acceptable when it's the first to fail.

After action reports are still being done. Root causes of the outages are still being analyzed. So we will continue to see what more we can do to promote robust networks. From the feedback I heard in Louisiana this week, I am particularly interested in ideas that could ensure roaming during disasters proceeds more smoothly and seamlessly, in ways we can get state officials more timely information about outages at 911 call centers, and in efforts to deepen the coordination between power restoration crews and their counterparts in telecom. After all, if you track the outage information in the wake of Hurricane Ida, you will see a classic saw tooth pattern in the chart: as telecom services are restored one day, those same

communications lines can be cut by power and other restoration crews as they do their jobs replacing poles and clearing roads. There remains room for improvement there.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their willingness to incorporate some of my pre- and post-Louisiana edits to the item. First, I am glad the FCC is now asking for comment on increasing its situational awareness of 911 and other emergency services, including through stronger industry coordination. Second, I am pleased we are seeking comment on enhancing the resiliency of covered 911 providers, particularly during power outages. I am also pleased that we are seeking comment promoting roaming quickly in qualifying disaster areas. These issues are all vital to improving resiliency.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff of the Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau for their work on this item. The item has my support.