

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Review of Rules and Requirements for Priority Services, National Security Emergency Preparedness Telecommunications Service Priority System, NTIA Petition for Rulemaking to Revise the Rules for Wireless Priority Service, NTIA Petition for Rulemaking to Revise the Rules for the Telecommunications Service Priority System, PS Docket No. 20-187, Report and Order (May 19, 2022).*

If you doubt there is such a thing as a perfect storm, go to Santa Fe and head to the mountains. You'll see a smoky haze in the air and one blackened ridge after another where fires have ravaged the national forest.

In New Mexico, the combination of a record heat wave, long-term drought, and relentlessly high winds have fanned what is now officially the state's largest recorded wildfire in history – the massive Calf Canyon-Hermits Peaks fire. As of Monday, it has already spanned more than 298,000 acres. But the fire danger is expected to remain high for the rest of the summer.

Let's face it – wildfires like this one are transforming the landscape. During the last ten years we have seen more than 60 wildfires over 100,000 acres in size in the United States. These largely western fires are moving faster, burning hotter, and proving harder to manage than ever before. They can wreak havoc on everything they encounter – including our communications networks. And when that happens, first responders are unable to access the information they need to do their jobs and people in affected areas can't call 911, reach out for help, and alert their loved ones when they are safe.

We need clear plans to restore public safety communications when disasters like these strike. With wildfires increasing, hurricane season around the bend, and other natural disasters likely to visit us in the future, the time to update these plans is now.

That's what we do today in this decision to modernize priority communications services. The Federal Communications Commission offers a suite of priority communications services to support national security and public safety communications during disaster. We do this in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security. These services include the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service, which provides priority calling for certain public safety users when landline networks are congested, the Wireless Priority Service, which provides priority calling when cellular networks are congested, and the Telecommunications Service Priority, which prioritizes how we install and restore critical data and voice communications.

When networks are down and emergency communications need to go through, these services make a real difference. In New Mexico, for instance, there is a 100 percent call completion rate for the more than two dozen Wireless Priority Service calls that have been placed during this fire season.

But here's the thing. It's been a long time since we updated these rules. For too long they have not made it easy for service providers to provide newer, IP-based communications services, including data and video. We fix that here. We also remove outdated requirements that were built for the analog era and we expand program eligibility to additional users.

Our communications networks have burned before, and Mother Nature's wrath is sure to visit them again. But today's action will help ensure that we are better prepared when that happens.

Thank you to the staff responsible for this public safety effort, including Ken Burnley, Justin Cain, Shawn Cochran, Michael Connelly, David Furth, Zenji Nakazawa, and Chris Smeenck from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Doug Klein, Keith McCrickard, and Bill Richardson from the Office of General Counsel; Patrick Brogan, Eugene Kiselev, Virginia Metallo, Chuck Needy, and Emily Talaga from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Christina Clearwater, Kamran Etemad, Charles Mathias, and Jessica Quinley from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Michele Berlove, and Kirk Burgee from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Kathy Harvey, Shannon Lipp, Jeremy Marcus, Raphael Sznajder, and Ashley Tyson from the Enforcement Bureau; and Joy Ragsdale and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.