



OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

February 13, 2023

Hans Vestberg
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Verizon
One Verizon Way
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. Vestberg:

In times of emergency, it is critical for government agencies to be able to reach consumers quickly and effectively to help ensure their safety. For this reason, in 2006 Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission to establish the Wireless Emergency Alert system to help form a comprehensive, nationwide public-alerting system. Since the program became operational in 2012, it has been used more than 70,000 times to warn the public about dangerous weather, missing children, or other critical situations. Its success reflects the fact that, since 2006, mobile devices have moved from the periphery to the core of our lives—they are with us always and have become a fundamental feature of public safety communications.

Today, WEA supports alerts only in English and Spanish. That means many non-English speakers in the United States continue to be deprived of crucial information concerning imminent dangers and other emergencies. Recently, New York Attorney General Letitia James highlighted the impact of Hurricane Ida in New York City, where many of the individuals who were injured or killed during the storm and the flooding in its wake could not understand English- or Spanish-only evacuation orders.

I believe that language should not be a barrier to getting critical information that could save lives. Given the importance of multilingual alerting capabilities in emergency situations, I kindly ask that Verizon respond to the following questions.

1. What is Verizon's current practice to ensure that WEA messages are accessible to as many language communities as possible?
2. Today, mobile devices offer users the ability to change the default language on their devices to a language of their choice. How can these kinds of device settings be leveraged to reach more people with WEAs? For example, could your networks allow alert originators to send a signal that would direct mobile devices to display pre-installed, pre-scripted WEA alerts in the default language selected by the user?
3. To the extent that your networks can allow mobile devices to display pre-installed, pre-scripted WEA alerts, could mobile devices couple pre-scripted messages with the context-specific informational elements in WEAs (such as the geographic area for which the alert is relevant or the time the alert is active), so that alert originators can send pre-scripted

multilingual alerts while also capturing the most critical information unique to each emergency?

4. Can machine translation technologies that are available today be used in emergency communications for translating alert messages into the most commonly spoken languages in the U.S.? If not, what steps remain to make this a reality?
5. Are there other ways to enhance WEA's accessibility for those who are not proficient in either English or Spanish?

Please send your responses to the undersigned via email (Jessica.Rosenworcel@fcc.gov) and file a copy of your response in PS Docket Nos. 15-91 and 15-94 by February 27, 2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Rosenworcel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Rosenworcel

cc: William H. Johnson
Senior Vice President
Federal Regulatory & Legal Affairs
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will.h.johnson@verizon.com