

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: Wireless Emergency Alerts, PS Docket No. 15-91; Amendments to Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System, PS Docket No. 15-94, Third Report and Order (October 19, 2023)

Wildfires in Hawaii. Severe storms in Illinois, Mississippi, and Vermont. Typhoons in Guam. Flooding in Alaska. Hurricanes Franklin, Idalia, and Lee. A quick look at FEMA's alerts over the last few months starkly illustrates the number of extreme weather events our country is facing. And while natural disasters may be the first emergencies that come to mind when we think of our wireless emergency alert system, federal, state, and local alerting authorities also use WEA for evacuate and shelter-in-place alerts, AMBER Alerts, and other emergency messages.

By definition, in an emergency, time is of the essence. Alert recipients must be able to receive, understand, and act upon WEA messages immediately. Too frequently, it is the most vulnerable members of our communities – including non-English or Spanish speakers and vision- or hearing-impaired individuals – who get left behind.

Today, we take several important steps to ensure not only that we reach them, but do so in the most efficient and effective manner:

1. We require providers who participate in WEA to support WEA alerts in the 13 most commonly spoken non-English languages in the United States.
2. We require providers to support alerts in American Sign Language.
3. We require mobile devices to support the presentation of alert messages with location-aware maps, so that recipients can see where they are in relation to the emergency, and plan their next steps.
4. We require providers to support biannual WEA tests, to give alerting authorities' information about alert use and performance, and to boost awareness of and trust in the WEA system.
5. And finally, we require all commercial mobile service providers to make clear, in a new, publicly-accessible database, whether they participate in WEA, and if they do, in what geographic areas and on what devices.

It will take time and work for these new requirements to come to fruition. In some cases, we are breaking new ground, pushing on the limits of current technical feasibility. But it is our job to push those limits when it comes to protecting Americans, and promoting public safety. Thank you to the many Commission staffers who worked on this item. I am proud to support it.