

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Improving 911 Reliability*, PS Docket No. 13-75; *Reliability and Continuity of Communications Networks, Including Broadband Technologies*, PS Docket No. 11-60.

Last night, I had the privilege of joining several hundred public safety officials to celebrate our nation's emergency calling system at the 9-1-1 Honors Gala. This is a great event every year, but this is also a special year for 9-1-1 history buffs.

After all, it was 45 years ago when the first 9-1-1 call was made in Haleyville, Alabama. And it was ten years ago when the Congressional Next Generation 9-1-1 Caucus was first established to create a bipartisan voice to support our nation's 9-1-1 systems. Today this Caucus is a force for good, led by Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Richard Burr, Representative Anna Eshoo, and Representative John Shimkus. It was also ten years ago when the NG9-1-1 Institute was established—a non-profit organization that helps deploy and advance next generation 9-1-1 services across the country. But history aside, last evening was an opportunity to celebrate the everyday heroes who run our 9-1-1 call centers, answer their phones with steely calm, and help ensure that help is on the way.

Because that is really what this is all about. You may only make one 9-1-1 call in your life, but as the old saw goes, it will be the most important call you ever make. You need to know that your call will be answered.

Yet last year, when the Derecho storm struck the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, too many 9-1-1 calls were not answered. Seventy-seven public safety answering points spanning six states lost some connectivity. This affected more than 3.6 million people. Seventeen 9-1-1 call centers lost service completely, leaving over two million people without access to 9-1-1.

Just after the Derecho, I visited the 9-1-1 center in Fairfax County, one of the public safety answering points that was unable to answer emergency calls. The head of Fairfax County's Department of Public Safety Communications described an eerie quiet in the aftermath of the storm, as the calls into 9-1-1 quickly and implausibly ceased. Something was not right; something was clearly broken.

Which brings us to the Commission's efforts today to fix these problems. As a result of our investigation into communications failures during the Derecho, we now have more clarity about what happened. We know that back-up generators and switches failed. We know that power failures undermined monitoring capabilities. We also know that 9-1-1 centers were left in the dark without service—and without notice.

So the proposals before us build on what we now know: the need for better back-up power at central offices, the need for improved 9-1-1 circuit auditing, the need for more diverse monitoring systems, and the need for more extensive reporting to 9-1-1 personnel on the front lines, answering calls. They are commonsense solutions. They should put us on the road toward making sure that failures like the ones we saw following the Derecho never happen again. For my part, I want these policies put in place by the first anniversary of this storm. I also recognize that as we move forward in this proceeding, there will be discussion about the need to take each step proposed. There will be concerns about cost. These are fair. Debate is a necessary—and healthy—part of our process.

But there should be no debate about why this conversation matters. Because this is not just a conversation about technical fixes. We must never forget this is a conversation about real people and their safety. Last night, I heard chilling stories from 9-1-1 operators at work in places like Aurora, Colorado and Newtown, Connecticut—just down the road from where I grew up. Last night and even now, the mention of these places conjures up difficult images. Their memories rightfully sting. And their horror leaves us justifiably unsettled.

But in our haze of grief and outrage, we should never forget who was there to help. The calls that came tumbling into our 9-1-1 centers after these and other incidents unleashed the best that our public safety systems have to offer. They sent help, they offered hope, and they saved lives.

Our rulemaking today is a small way of honoring their efforts, and a big part of making sure that our nation's 9-1-1 systems are dependable. It is also an essential part of making sure that the frailties we saw in the Derecho last year are fixed and that every call to 9-1-1 is answered.

I support this rulemaking. Thank you to the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for your work to deliver it to us today.