

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER**

Re: *911 Governance and Accountability*, PS Docket No. 14-193; *Improving 911 Reliability*, PS Docket No. 13-75

Technology transitions are changing the way calls to 911 are processed and completed across America. Tremendous benefits can be realized by the transition of public safety communications to IP-based networks. For example, IP-based Next Generation 911 networks will enable call centers to receive a greater range of information – such as text, video, and data from vehicle crash sensors – to better support first responders in an emergency.

We must encourage these new capabilities through 911 governance policies that support and reward innovation while ensuring that sufficient protections are in place so that Americans can be sure 911 will work when they need it to work.

The introduction of new technologies forces us to change the way we think about these services, and introduces new vulnerabilities that we cannot ignore.

For example, the process of routing and completing a single 911 call now often involves multiple companies, operating different parts of the call chain, located in different states, all of whom are potentially thousands of miles away from where the actual call is placed. That means a single failure in one location can leave millions of people without 911 service across multiple states, indeed across the nation.

With 911 capabilities that were previously provided by a single company divided among several companies spread out across the country, we at the Federal level must work hand in glove with our state and local colleagues to preserve accountability for reliable service at each link in the call-completion chain.

Additionally, we are all used to thinking about 911 outages as a result of natural disasters – tornados, hurricanes, derechos – with localized impact. However, we have seen a spike in so-called “sunny day” outages caused by preventable software glitches or database failures – not “acts of God.”

As the Public Safety Bureau reported to the Commission in October, a “sunny day” outage this past April left more than 11 million consumers in 7 states without 911 service for up to 6 hours. Some 6,600 calls for help to 911 were not completed during that time. This is unacceptable.

States and localities play an essential role in 911 governance, and their continued oversight is vital to ensuring that 911 service remains effective and reliable in every community. The item we adopt today proposes a framework for 911 governance that ensures state and local partners continue to be empowered to fulfill this important oversight responsibility within their jurisdictions. Together with state and local partners, we can – and will – ensure that there are no gaps in oversight, through the technology transition and into the future.

Specifically, the NPRM proposes a 911 governance structure designed to ensure that technology transitions are managed in a way that maximizes the availability, reliability, and resiliency of 911 networks, as well as the accountability of all participants in the 911-call completion process. These collaborative, technology-neutral proposals underscore the Commission’s commitment to working with state and local partners to protect the enduring values that consumers have rightly come to expect from their communications providers.

As the world evolves to next generation 911 systems, the FCC has a responsibility to ensure Americans are confident that the service they rely on to reach first responders is reliable, providers are accountable and 911 is always accessible in their time of need.