

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN THOMAS E. WHEELER**

Re: Improving Wireless Emergency Alerts and Community Initiated Alerting (PS Docket No. 15-91)

We often talk about how the Commission's policies have the power to improve people's lives. Wireless Emergency Alerts go beyond improving lives; these alerts save lives.

Consider the events of July 1, 2013 in East Windsor, Connecticut. A tornado swept through town, tearing apart an inflatable indoor soccer dome and blowing parts onto the nearby highway. Literally two minutes before the tornado hit, the soccer dome was filled with 29 children and five camp counselors. With moments to spare, they were evacuated to an adjoining building where they sought shelter. The reason they knew to seek cover was that the manager of the soccer camp received a Wireless Emergency Alert from the National Weather Service on her phone saying a tornado was headed her way, and she responded immediately.

Available since 2012, Wireless Emergency Alerts provide advance warning directly to your mobile phone in threatening situations where a few moments can make all the difference. Typical messages include severe weather information and Amber Alerts, but we have also seen local law enforcement use this tool to clear an area when an active gunman opened fire on random people at a Los Angeles apartment complex.

Wireless Emergency Alerts mark an important step forward in our use of technology to enhance public safety. Now that stakeholders have a few years' experience with the service, we can make it even better.

Today's proposal would make Wireless Emergency Alerts an even more effective tool for communicating important information to the public. For example, it proposes increasing the amount and type of information that can be included in alerts so that users can be better informed about the type of emergency and the best actions to take in response. We also seek to improve alert quality and accessibility by those with disabilities through a number of proposals including enabling embedded phone numbers or URLs and multimedia messaging.

The proposal would also make it easier for state and local authorities to send alerts, test the service, train personnel, and provide alerts on additional types of emergencies. In addition, we are seeking comment a variety of other potential enhancements, including how best to implement multilingual alerting.

To ensure that people do not receive unwarranted alarms in situations where they face no danger, we also propose to require participating wireless providers to deliver the alerts to more targeted geographic areas.

Wireless Emergency Alerts have already saved lives. It only makes sense to expand its use and increase its effectiveness.

Thank you to the Public Safety Bureau for their work on this item.