

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: Ensuring Continuity of 911 Communications, PS Docket No. 14-174, Report and Order

For decades, traditional landline telephones provided customers with the requisite electrical power over copper wire needed for reliable voice service. With a plug in jack, and an aqua-green princess rotary phone, I never doubted for a moment that when I picked up the receiver I would hear a dial tone, even if the lights were out.

Millions no longer live in that world. Power grid failure for them will mean an interruption in landline service in a matter of hours. About 40% of Americans rely solely on mobile devices. There are those who have landline service, but rarely use it. Scores have transitioned to voice service that no longer relies on copper wires, through cable, fiber or a fixed wireless broadband provider that does not transmit electrical power through the line. And the changes that all of these transitions bring must be made clear to them.

One of the main challenges of these technology transitions is not just that people adopt at different speeds, but that they may be unaware of the limitations of these technologies, especially in the early stages of use. Often these limitations come in the form of small annoyances like a promising new feature that does not work exactly as advertised. But, when the limitation of a new technology jeopardizes something as fundamental and essential as the ability to contact 911 in case of an emergency, we must act.

With the long history of electrical power supplied through a phone line, customers might reasonably – but incorrectly – expect their landline service will be functional during an electric power outage. And for all of the convenience and features these services may offer, even the most enlightened customer might forget to ask about power backups when they transition to a new service.

That is why today's action is so important. It provides information and options to consumers that will help them make decisions in line with their particular needs. It requires providers to offer eight hours of battery backup as an option for new customers, and in three years, it mandates that providers supply them with a 24-hour backup solution. It also requires providers to disclose information about backup power options at the point of sale to new subscribers, and annually thereafter to all subscribers. This will allow a customer, at the moment she is thinking about transitioning to a new service, the means to consider options in the event of a commercial power outage and choose an optimal solution in case of an emergency.

To be clear: many providers currently provide backup power information and effective solutions that allow customers to reach emergency services during a commercial power outage. Today's actions merely give providers additional flexibility to find backup power solutions that should work for all customers, particularly in a time of crisis. I commend Chairman Wheeler for raising the profile of this issue and the Public Safety Bureau for their presentation and for finding a solution that strikes an appropriate balance between cost and public safety.