

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

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

September is National Preparedness Month. It was also in September—more years ago than I care to count—that I moved into an apartment in New York. It was small and unlovely. It was also within easy walking distance of the neighborhood where a bomb exploded earlier this month. What I learned from my time in New York is that its residents may shuffle down the sidewalks in an anonymous blur, but when crisis ensues they rally. They love their city. So on September 19 when mobile phones blared with the piercing sound of a wireless emergency alert urging them to look for the bombing suspect, they took note. He was located a few hours later and last week charged by state and federal prosecutors.

The question now is how we can make alerts like this better. That's not just a question for New York. It's a question for all of us. Our wireless devices are in our palms, our pockets, our purses—they are with us always. Let's recognize them for what they are: a formidable tool for public safety.

Congress saw this very clearly when it created the Warning, Alert and Response Network Act ten years ago. But the engineering and approach behind this emergency alert system is dated—and though its power has been demonstrated in New York and elsewhere, so have its limitations.

We tackle some of those limitations today. We update and modernize key elements of the wireless emergency alert system. In particular, we increase the length of alerts from 90 to 360 characters. This will allow them to include embedded references, like telephone numbers. In addition, we better target the geographic delivery of messages. We also expand testing opportunities for state and local public safety authorities.

But by no means should we stop here. Because the episode near my old neighborhood did more than burn and damage buildings. It demonstrated that going forward we can do more with these messages. Vague directives in text about where to find more information about the suspect—as we saw in New York—are not good enough. As we move into the 5G future we need to ensure that multimedia is available in all of our alert messages. Because as Senator Schumer has said, “[w]hen it comes to a terrorist or other very dangerous criminal on the run, a picture not only is worth a thousand words, it could save a thousand lives if the right person sees it.” Amen. Let's make it happen.