

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80; *Petition of California Public Utilities Commission and the people of the State of California for Rulemaking on States' Access to the Network Outage Reporting System ("NORS") and a Ruling Granting California Access to NORS*, RM No. 11588 (terminated).

At 1:30 PM on October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael smashed into Florida's Gulf Coast. It peaked at a Category 5 with sustained winds clocked at 160 miles per hour. It ranks as the strongest hurricane to touch down on U.S. soil in nearly 50 years. Mexico Beach, Florida, took a direct hit.

It devastated the community. Jack—a retired teacher and Army vet—stood on top of the mangled remains of a home he bought just two months earlier, and he pointed towards an empty lot a few blocks away. He told me that's where a house was ripped off its foundation and sent tumbling nearly a quarter mile down the road, disintegrating every structure in its path. The city's water tower—made out of reinforced steel—bent like a paperclip, taking down the antennas used for public safety communications with it. The punishing winds and debris were followed by a storm surge 14 feet high. Cars and entire parking structures were pushed inland with the surge, trapping residents in their homes. It was a level of destruction that veteran first responders told me they had never seen.

Even with significant communications outages in the wake of Hurricane Michael, many portions of the network, including the fiber and cable plant, showed notable resiliency. While spending two days in Mexico Beach with a telecom crew rebuilding the network, the team showed me a fiber line that sat yards under the storm surge yet remained operational.

In many cases, however, lines that weathered the storm were cut (sometimes multiple times) during the recovery and restoration effort. Line cuts during storm restoration are nothing new—it's why we often see ups and downs in the FCC's daily outage reports following a storm.

In this case, many of those cuts and communications losses were preventable and only slowed down work to get the network back online. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, thousands of energy company crews and contractors worked around the clock to restore power, and this meant cutting, pulling, and replacing thousands of utility poles. Unfortunately, their work resulted in a significant number of cuts to fiber and other communications lines. In fact, one fiber company reported 37 cuts in the first few days following the storm. Sometimes, lines were cut clean off damaged poles when they could have been detached and put on the ground or left in place. Following that recovery effort, the communication and power industries have worked to improve their coordination efforts to avoid unnecessary line cuts.

The FCC has also continued our work to improve network resiliency. Chairman Pai has launched a comprehensive effort to strengthen our communications networks and recovery efforts. That work includes the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau's initiatives as well as a BDAC working group on disaster response and recovery.

We continue that effort today with a proposal that would share additional outage information with qualified federal, state, and local agencies. This can help ensure greater coordination in the wake of natural disasters, help avoid unnecessary lines cuts during recovery efforts, and speed the restoration of networks. With the right safeguards in place to ensure that sensitive information is protected, I'm confident that information sharing will empower first responders—from public safety officials to telecom crews that hit the ground as soon as it is safe—to get their important work done.

Thank you to the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for its hard work on this item. It has my support.