

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Wireless E911 Location Accuracy Requirements*, PS Docket No. 07-114

Calls to 911 are often a matter of life or death. When seconds count, emergency responders may need to quickly find a caller who cannot provide their precise location to dispatchers. As the Commission has repeatedly affirmed, knowing a caller's vertical, or "z-axis," location may be critical in those situations, particularly in dense areas with lots of multistory buildings. Today's decision is an important step toward ensuring that first responders will have z-axis information when they need it.

While precise location information is critical to an effective emergency response, it can also be dangerous in the wrong hands. Over the last year, I have been pleased that my colleagues and I could work together to create robust privacy safeguards for this sensitive location data. We have developed a regulatory framework for z-axis and dispatchable location data that prevents abuse by wireless carriers as well as their third-party vendors. The Notices of Apparent Liability we approved earlier this year against AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, and T-Mobile for misuse of customer location data should make clear that we will hold wireless carriers responsible if they fail to ensure that the vendors they choose comply with our privacy rules and adopt appropriate safeguards.

Though I support today's action, I also recognize that there is much more to do. Based on the record in this proceeding, I am confident that technological developments will soon enable us to tighten the requirement beyond plus or minus three meters. I will continue to encourage industry to step on the gas in working towards even more accurate solutions—and encourage the Commission to soon require even more precise z-axis location information. We must remain focused on the ultimate goal: getting first responders to the precise location where they are needed.

I will also continue to highlight the importance of technology-neutral solutions. The progress many innovators have made using barometric pressure sensors is impressive, and those sensors will become more ubiquitous as costs continue to decrease. But we must recognize that not all devices, particularly the less expensive devices often offered by Lifeline providers, contain barometric pressure sensors. As the item explains, there are technologies on the horizon that can provide z-axis information even for these less expensive devices. The Commission should encourage the development of those solutions, because a speedy response in an emergency should not be luxury. If, after the initial April 2021 deadline, it appears that Lifeline subscribers are not benefitting from our z-axis rules, the Commission must consider additional rules to close that gap. As I have long said, lifesaving technology needs to be available to everyone.

I thank the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau staff for their work on this safety-critical item.