

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Improving 911 Reliability*, PS Docket No. 13-75; *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80; *New Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, ET Docket No. 04-35, Second Report and Order

Americans need and deserve reliable access to emergency services. That's why we've worked so hard at the Commission to expand access to 911, improve location and callback information, strengthen network resilience, and enhance situational awareness when our networks do come down.

There's plenty to do to make 911 state-of-the-art. But as we reimagine the 911 services of tomorrow, we must continue to find ways to improve the system as it works today. That's exactly what we're doing with this order. We're enhancing speed—by making sure all providers know to report outages as soon as possible, but no later than 30 minutes after discovery. We're saving effort—by ensuring that public safety officials receive outage notifications the same way, and with more actionable content. We're increasing awareness—by requiring providers to keep public safety officials in the loop as they work to restore the network. And we're also avoiding error—by requiring providers to maintain up-to-date contact information before realizing, in the throes of an actual outage, that they have a message delivery problem.

These steps are important. Just last week, I visited a public safety answering point in Kansas City. And let me tell you, they're working hard—improving emergency call routing, migrating to next-generation infrastructure, and enhancing address data and mapping capabilities for 911 call-takers. They're training up their workforce—and in many areas, dealing with significant staff shortages. They're also working to secure their networks in the face of cyber threats, including ransomware attacks.

The last thing they need is to be left in the dark when a carrier's network comes down. Just imagine. You are a public safety official responsible for dispatching potentially lifesaving assistance to the public. And yet, you don't even know that the public can't reach you, and when communications will be restored, because a provider failed its obligation to act with the urgency that a network outage deserves. Or perhaps you learn about the outage in time, but find yourself scrambling to get more information, or an update from the carrier, as you're simultaneously figuring out how to adapt. All of this may seem unthinkable but, unfortunately, the unthinkable here has happened before. We must continue to fine-tune our rules until scenarios like these become a thing of the past.

I thank the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for its excellent work on this item.