

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Resilient Networks*, PS Docket No 21-346; *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 and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

When the Commission created the Disaster Information Reporting System in 2007, more commonly known as DIRS, the nation was dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. We watched, shocked and terrified, at what we saw in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the surrounding communities. And then we got to work. We realized that the lack of information about network operation and repair status was hampering recovery efforts and that by working together the Commission and network providers could do more. Carriers could report—voluntarily—their operational status and restoration information during and after major disasters which the Commission could use and share with relevant authorities to benefit Americans.

DIRS was a good start, but it wasn't perfect. Even now, quite simply, too many providers decline to participate, blunting its effectiveness and restricting the availability of information necessary to determine the status of the repair, replacement, and restoration of communications infrastructure. And, as it turns out, these gaps in knowledge during disasters and recovery can lead to big problems. Our federal partners, such as FEMA, and state and local governments and authorities, rely on the FCC to help inform their decisions on how to best serve their communities. Without the full picture of communications network status in affected communities, authorities are limited in their efforts to help impacted Americans. Severe weather events that harm communications networks and cause outages, like the wildfires in Hawaii or Hurricane Ian, are becoming more common.¹ It is time to act.

Our decision today to require cable, wireline, wireless, and interconnected VoIP providers to report their infrastructure status information in DIRS when the Commission activates it is timely and will support consumers. I also support seeking comment on expanding our DIRS filing obligations to other communications networks, including TV and radio broadcasters, satellite providers, and broadband Internet access service providers. These communications providers play integral roles in providing access to information for local communities. It makes sense to consider including them in DIRS, while at the same time seeking comment on what modifications may be necessary to ensure that their participation is consistent with the unique challenges inherent in their transmission technologies.

I thank the FCC staff for their hard work. I approve.

¹ U.S. Struck with Historic Number of Billion-dollar Disasters in 2023, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Jan. 9, 2024, <https://www.noaa.gov/news/us-struck-with-historic-number-of-billion-dollar-disasters-in-2023>.