

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
BANKING
DEMOCRATIC POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS
FINANCE
JUDICIARY
RULES

January 20, 2015

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The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

I applaud the Commission for taking on the challenge of updating its rules for emergency 9-1-1 calls to ensure that first responders are able to find cell phone callers. I write to encourage you to finalize your rulemaking process and swiftly begin implementation of new rules.

Today, as many as 70% of calls made to 9-1-1 may be made from cell phones; it is critical for public safety that dispatchers be able to find those cell phone callers as reliably as they can find callers who use land lines. Unfortunately, the rules in place today are simply not adequate to ensure that cell phone callers can be found, especially when calls are placed from indoors.

The consequences of inadequate location accuracy services are literally deadly. A real life, heartbreaking example from my home state of New York illustrates the severity of this problem. In June 2013, an elderly New York woman called 9-1-1 while having a stroke, but FDNY and EMT dispatchers were sent to the wrong address based on a cell tower reading. Because she endured a stroke, her speech was slurred and she was unable to provide dispatchers with the correct location. She was on the phone for nearly 8 hours before she was located. Unfortunately she died the next day.

I was heartened to see that the FCC has decided to tackle this issue, and even more encouraged that the wireless industry and public safety groups heeded your call to collaborate and identify a workable framework for improved location accuracy.

I feel very strongly that the final rules you adopt should meet the principles identified by Commissioner Rosenworcel last year: first and foremost, a 9-1-1 call from a cell phone should result in a dispatchable location; that is the only way to ensure that emergency service providers can reliably get to callers in need. Second, any solution must be verifiable; we cannot simply trust that any particular technological solution will work. Third, the rules must be flexible to accommodate rapidly evolving technology. And finally, the rules need to be implemented as fast

as is reasonably possible, although the speediness of implementation must not be prioritized over accuracy and safety.

I also encourage the FCC to continue working with public safety and industry stakeholders to ensure that their voices are heard. The collective expertise from the wireless and emergency services sectors is invaluable in putting together an effective solution for today and for the future.

In conclusion, I urge you to take swift action on this issue. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles E. Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Charles E. Schumer
US Senator