



TOM WHEELER
CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

February 17, 2016

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Pallone:

Your leadership to improve our nation's network resiliency, particularly when faced with emergencies like Super Storm Sandy, or more recently, Winter Storm Jonas is unparalleled. I share your commitment to ensuring that our cellular, television and 911 services can connect citizens when the unexpected hits. Your legislation, the Securing Access to Networks in Disasters Act, contains useful tools, and I look forward to working with you closely on strengthening our networks. Given your expertise and leadership, I wanted to update you on the successful performance of the nation's wireless infrastructure during Winter Storm Jonas, which affected a significant population on the east coast of the U.S.

Mandatory outage reports filed by carriers indicate that, in total, fewer than 27,000 customers of the millions of Americans in the affected area temporarily lost wireless service across nine states and the District of Columbia. This included New Jersey, where wireless service outages related to the loss of commercial power were quickly resolved. Given the scope of the storm there were surprisingly few outages compared to previous storms, a fact that seems to indicate increased carrier resiliency efforts.

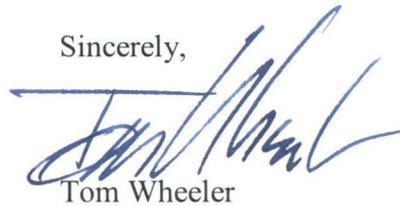
In addition to the information we gather from outage reports, the Commission stays in contact with carriers throughout severe weather events via its continuously-manned Operations Center. While the carriers were very successful in remaining operational during the storm, both the Commission and the industry also prepared for a worse scenario with many carriers preparing full crisis management teams. Examples of their disaster preparations and procedures include:

- **Backup Power:** Employing numerous strategies to ensure backup power availability such as inventorying generator supply and strategically positioning backup generators; making arrangements for fuel services to supply existing generators; and installing and testing high-capacity backup batteries at cell sites. The outages that did occur were a result of commercial power failures; carriers continue to work with utility companies to minimize outage impacts.

- Backup Equipment: Strategically positioning Cell on Wheels (COWS) for deployment should facilities be out of service; putting networks in high-capacity mode to prioritize voice calls and cover a larger area.
- Public Warnings: Actively notifying the public to prepare them for an emergency situation, providing tips such as developing a family communication plan, strategies for keeping batteries charged, making lists of emergency contacts, and utilizing text messages if voice calling becomes difficult.
- Public Officials: Numerous carriers indicated that they had direct outreach with local public officials in advance of the storm.
- Wi-Fi Offload: Two cable carriers opened their Wi-Fi networks in affected areas to the public to allow wireless devices to connect even if their wireless service was affected.

I am pleased with the resilience that our nation's communications networks demonstrated in Winter Storm Jonas, but our work is not done. I hope in the coming weeks you and I may work together on initiatives with the wireless industry and other stakeholders, including state and local governments, public safety and consumers, to increase their disaster resiliency and ensure the public is protected in times of emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tom Wheeler