PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
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Washington, D.C. 20554

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PUBLIC SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY BUREAU SHARES RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FROM SEPTEMBER 11, 2017 911 WORKSHOP

PS Docket No. 17-68

On September 11, 2017, the Federal Communications Commission's (Commission) Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) hosted a workshop to discuss best practices for improving situational awareness during 911 outages.[1] In particular, PSHSB examined how to strengthen Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) 911 service outage notifications and how to best communicate with consumers about alternative methods of accessing emergency services during 911 outages.[2] The workshop participants included state and local 911 administrators, 911 call center directors, industry technology and policy experts, public safety advocacy organizations, and disability access representatives.[3] PSHSB highlights below the recommended practices that received broad support from workshop participants.[4]

PSAP Notification of 911 Outages

Service providers should provide PSAPs with "actionable information" whenever 911 is down.
- Service providers should notify PSAPs about outages that affect any aspect of 911 service, including service-wide outages.[5]
- Service providers should offer PSAPs an initial notification of 911 service outages as soon as they can offer a "strong maybe" that there is an outage taking place – in other words, even before

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[1] The workshop fulfilled the PSHSB's previously stated intention to convene stakeholders at a workshop to discuss recommended practices for improving situational awareness during 911 outages. *See* PSHSB, *March 8, 2017 AT&T VoLTE 911 Outage Report and Recommendations*, PS Docket No. 17-68, 15, para. 33 (2017), https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-344941A1.pdf. The Commission defines an "outage" as "a significant degradation in the ability of an end user to establish and maintain a channel of communications as a result of failure or degradation in the performance of a communications provider's network." 47 CFR § 4.5(a). A "911 outage" is one that "potentially affects a 911 special facility." 47 CFR § 4.5(e).

[2] *See* PSHSB, *Announcing Workshop on Improving Situational Awareness During 911 Outages*, Public Notice, DA 17-719 (PSHSB 2017), https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-17-719A1.pdf.

[3] *See* PSHSB, *Final Agenda* (PSHSB 2017), https://drupal7admin.fcc.gov/file/12834/download (last visited Dec. 7, 2017). The full workshop video is available for viewing at FCC, Improving Situational Awareness During 911 Outages, https://www.fcc.gov/news-events/events/2017/09/improving-situational-awareness-during-911-outages (last visited Dec. 8, 2017) (*Workshop Video Recording*). The Bureau also notes that the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS) Network Reliability Steering Committee (NRSC) is currently working on next steps to promote situational awareness of 911 outages. We anticipate reviewing their work.

[4] These best practices are voluntary and for informational purposes only, and do not affect the content or applicability of the Commission's PSAP notification rules. *See* 47 CFR § 4.9.

[5] *See*, *e.g.*, *Workshop Video Recording* at 109:32.

an outage can be confirmed with complete certainty.[6] PSAPs and service providers should create training opportunities to discuss how to send and respond to notifications during the critical period immediately following an outage when the outage's scope and root cause may not yet be completely known.

- Service providers should offer PSAPs notifications that include a description of affected network elements, geographic scope, expected duration, and any other information that could have an impact on 911 service.

Service providers should send an authoritative outage notification that reliably gets to everyone who needs it.

- Where possible, service providers should identify the source of a 911 outage to PSAPs.[7]
- Service providers should coordinate with state 911 authorities in advance about 911 notification approaches that work best for their respective areas. For example, states that operate their own 911 networks or that have state-wide 911 administrators may wish to receive outage information directly (instead of, or in addition to, the affected PSAPs).[8]
- Service providers should include contact information for their network operations centers (NOCs) in all PSAP notifications, in case the PSAP has follow-up questions or information to share with the service provider.
- PSAPs should provide back-up point(s) of contact to ensure that service providers can relay 911 outage information, regardless of whether their primary contact for outage notification is out of the office (*e.g.,* designating an individual's personal email account as the PSAP's official outage notification contact may not be effective if that person is unavailable and not monitoring his or her inbox).

Service providers should ensure outage notifications are provided in an effective format.

- Service providers should offer PSAP notifications in a consistent format to facilitate the PSAP's comprehension of outage information.
- Service providers should leverage emerging technologies to improve the way outage notifications are communicated. For example, service providers should consider supplementing phone and e-mail notifications with notification through an online dashboard or portal, text messages, or map-based interfaces, where available.[9]

Promoting Public Awareness of 911 Outages

Send authoritative information using a variety of methods.

- PSAPs and service providers should coordinate as soon as possible following an outage to present a consistent and authoritative public message about 911 outages.
- PSAPs and service providers should use social media to supplement, rather than replace, television and radio broadcast in order to inform the public about 911 outages.[10]

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[6] *See*, *e.g.*, *Workshop Video Recording* at 72:36, 77:38.

[7] *See*, *e.g.*, *Workshop Video Recording* at 107:58.

[8] *See*, *e.g.*, *Workshop Video Recording* at 32:34; 46:20.

[9] *See*, *e.g.*, *Workshop Video Recording* at 56:53, 63:41.

[10] *See*, *e.g.*, *Workshop Video Recording* at 165:24.

- PSAPs should consider becoming authorized to use Wireless Emergency Alerts, because they can be an effective tool to notify the public about 911 outages.[11]

Make sure your message is accessible.
- PSAPs and service providers should make sure that communication with the public about 911 outages is accessible to all consumers, including those with hearing or other disabilities and those with limited English proficiency. For example, PSAPs and service providers should consider using "universal design" principles.[12] PSAPs and service providers should also consider creating captioned 911 outage preparedness videos.

For further information, contact James Wiley, Attorney Advisor, Cybersecurity and Communications Reliability Division, PSHSB, (202) 418-1678, james.wiley@fcc.gov.

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[11] More information about how to become authorized to use WEA is available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). *See* FEMA, How to Sign up for IPAWS, https://www.fema.gov/how-sign-ipaws (last visited Dec. 8, 2017).

[12] *See* National Center on Universal Design for Learning, About UDL, http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl (last visited Dec. 8, 2017).