



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI ANNOUNCES COMMITMENT BY MAJOR U.S. WIRELESS CARRIERS & PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERS TO ACCELERATE NATIONWIDE TEXT-TO-911 SERVICES; CALLS FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH FCC ON NEXT-GENERATION 9-1-1 INITIATIVES

Voluntary agreement responds to Chairman Genachowski's call for action to enable nationwide text-to-911 for all Americans "as quickly as possible"

Washington, D.C. – FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski announced today that the nation's four largest wireless carriers – AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile – have agreed to accelerate the availability of text-to-911, with major deployments expected in 2013 and a commitment to nationwide availability by May 15, 2014. Building on text-to-911 deployments and trials that are already underway, this agreement will accelerate progress and ensure that over 90 percent of the nation's wireless consumers, including millions of consumers with hearing or speech disabilities, will be able to access emergency services by sending a text message to 911, where local 911 call centers (known as a Public Safety Answering Points, or PSAPs) are also prepared to receive the texts.

Text-to-911 will provide consumers with enhanced access to emergency communications in situations where a voice call could endanger the caller, or a person with disabilities is unable to make a voice call. Text-to-911 will be a complement to, not a substitute for, voice calls to 911 services, and consumers should always make a voice call to 911 during an emergency if they can.

In addition, to help eliminate consumer confusion while text-to-911 capability is being phased-in, the carriers have committed to provide an automatic "bounce back" text message to notify consumers if their attempt to reach 911 via text message was unsuccessful because this service is not yet available in their area. Such a message would instruct the recipient to make a voice call to a 911 center. The four carriers will fully implement this "bounce back" capability across their networks by June 30, 2013.

The Commission will take additional action as necessary to ensure the public's ability to reach 911 using text messaging. Next week, the FCC will consider steps towards ensuring that text-to-911 is made available as soon as possible by all carriers, and over-the-top providers who offer Internet-based text services. The Commission will continue to work with all stakeholders including 911 authorities, PSAPs, the Emergency Access Advisory Committee, public safety organizations, disability organizations, consumer groups and industry on this issue.

Today, Chairman Genachowski said, "Access to 911 must catch up with how consumers communicate in the 21st century – and today, we are one step closer towards that vital goal. Last year I announced a comprehensive plan to accelerate the transition to Next Generation 911, including text-to-911, and the FCC has acted to advance this effort.

“I also called on the communications industry and public safety entities to work together to enable nationwide text-to-911 as quickly as possible, and I am pleased that the nation’s four largest wireless carriers and leading public safety organizations have responded with today’s commitment, which will save lives starting in 2013.

“This is good progress, but our work is not done. Next week the FCC will consider further actions to advance text-to-911 for all consumers. We will also take additional steps in this area next year, including closely monitoring carriers’ compliance with the commitments they have made today and addressing other aspects of Next Generation 911 such as enabling transmission of photos and videos to 9-1-1 centers. We are also working to strengthen the resiliency and reliability of the existing 911 system, where significant deficiencies were revealed by this summer’s Derecho.”

“I would like to thank all those involved in developing today’s important agreement.”

In his 2011 address to the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) about Next Generation 911 (NG911) services, which includes but is not limited to text, Chairman Genachowski said, “Getting NG911 up and running is going to take a lot of work on the part of a lot of people. Without a comprehensive and coordinated strategy, we’ll see a patchwork deployment of NG911 over the next 5 to 10 years, with much of the United States still without any NG911 capability at the end of that period. That’s not the right outcome. It’s imperative that NG911 be deployed to all Americans as quickly as possible, and in the most effective and cost-efficient way.”

To read the Chairman’s full speech at APCO, please click [HERE](#).

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