



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 20, 2014

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FCC ACTS TO HELP EMERGENCY RESPONDERS LOCATE WIRELESS 911 CALLERS

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today proposed rules to help emergency responders better locate wireless callers to 911. The proposed updates to the Commission’s Enhanced 911 (E911) rules respond to Americans’ increasing use of wireless phones to call 911, especially from indoors, and take advantage of technological developments that allow for more accurate location information to be transmitted with 911 calls.

The Commission’s current E911 rules require wireless providers to automatically transmit information to 911 call centers on the location of wireless 911 callers within certain parameters for accuracy. These rules, which were adopted in 1996 and underwent their last major revision in 2010, enable wireless providers to meet this accuracy standard based solely on the performance of outdoor wireless 911 calls. However many Americans are replacing landlines with wireless phones, and calling patterns are changing. For example, reports indicate that nearly 73 percent of 911 calls in California are made from wireless phones, and approximately 80 percent of all smartphone use occurs indoors.

In light of these trends, the Commission today proposed changes to its E911 rules to include indoor location accuracy – particularly location accuracy in challenging indoor environments such as large multi-story buildings, where first responders are often unable to determine the floor or even the building where the 911 call originated. Determining the location of indoor wireless callers is more challenging than determining an outdoor location, but innovation and technological developments in this area are making it easier to locate mobile devices wherever they are.

The Commission proposes in the near term that wireless providers meet interim location accuracy metrics that would be sufficient to identify the building for most indoor calls. The Commission also proposes that wireless providers deliver vertical location information that would enable first responders to identify the floor level for most calls from multi-story buildings. In the long term, the Commission seeks to develop more granular indoor location accuracy standards that would require identification of the specific room, office, or apartment where a wireless 911 call is made. These standards would rely on the advancing capabilities of indoor location technology and increasing deployment of in-building communications infrastructure.

The Commission also proposed additional steps to strengthen its existing E911 rules to ensure delivery of more timely, accurate, and actionable location information for all wireless 911 calls. In addition, the Commission is seeking comment on whether to revisit its timeframe for replacing its current handset- and network-based location accuracy standards with a single standard in light of technological developments.

While seeking comment on its proposals, the Commission also encouraged industry, the public safety community, and other stakeholders to work collaboratively to develop alternate proposals for its consideration. The Commission emphasized that its ultimate objective is that all Americans – whether they

are calling from urban or rural areas, from indoors or outdoors – receive the support they need in times of emergency.

Action by the Commission February 20, 2014, by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 14-13). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn and Rosenworcel with Commissioners Pai and O’Rielly approving in part and concurring in part. Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O’Rielly issuing statements.

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