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For Immediate Release

FCC ADOPTS RULES TO HELP AMERICANS COMMUNICATE DURING EMERGENCIES

WASHINGTON, August 6, 2015 – The Federal Communications Commission today adopted rules to help ensure that consumers have the information and tools necessary to maintain landline home telephone service during emergencies. The rules require providers of modern home voice services to offer consumers information and the option to buy backup power so they can use their phone service during electric outages.

The FCC is taking action because home voice service is changing. Traditional, copper-based, landline phone service typically works during electric outages because the service provides its own power. In contrast, modern alternatives usually need backup power to keep operating. The new rules are therefore designed to help customers of these modern alternatives maintain available communications at home during electric outages.

Under the new rules, providers of modern home voice services (that is, facilities-based, fixed, voice residential service that is not line-powered) will be required to ensure that a technical solution for eight hours of standby backup power is available for consumers to purchase at the point of sale. Within three years, these providers will also be required to offer an option for 24 hours of standby backup power. The decision to purchase backup power will be up to consumers – they will not be forced to purchase or pay for equipment they do not want.

The rules also require these providers to inform both new and current customers about service limitations during electric outages and the steps they can take to address those risks, including how to keep their service operational during a multi-day power outage.

Today's action will empower consumers to make informed choices and support their need for 911 service during emergencies.

Action by the Commission August 6, 2015 by Report and Order (FCC 15-98). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, and Pai approving. Commissioner O'Rielly concurring. Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai, and O'Rielly issuing statements.

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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).