

**Remarks of Rear Admiral (ret.) David Simpson,
Chief of the FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau**

**NENA
911 Goes to Washington
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-As Prepared for Delivery-

Brian [Fontes], thank you for your introduction, and thank you to NENA for inviting me to speak to you today.

This is my third 911 Goes to Washington, and I'm always inspired by the privilege of meeting with the heart of the 911 community that is represented here. The work you do every day is inspiring, and we are all grateful for your daily commitment and service to protecting safety of life and property.

The NG911 Transition at the National Level

Let me start by following up on some of the things that Chairman Wheeler talked about in his video.

He has called for action at the national level to accelerate the transition to Next Generation 911, and as he said, we at the Commission are committed to working with everyone in the 911 community to make that happen.

It is vitally important to think about this as a national effort. Even though 911 is a service that is delivered at the local community level – and we need to preserve that local community focus as we transition to Next Gen 911 – 911 is also a national system and a national asset.

That means we cannot tackle the challenge of the NG911 transition just on a PSAP-by-PSAP basis, or even state-by-state. A lot of the work must be done at the PSAP and state level, but if we limit ourselves to that approach, the result will be a patchwork system and many communities will be left behind.

So how do we think about getting to NG911 as a nation? To start, here are four ideas that the Chairman has mentioned where a national focus is important. Let me emphasize at the outset: we're not suggesting these are the only ideas out there, or even the best ideas out there. We welcome everyone to come to the table with their best ideas.

But here is what we have come up with to start.

First – Funding to help cover state/local NG911 capital costs

We all know that lack of sufficient funding at the state and local level is one of the biggest obstacles to moving forward with the NG911 transition.

Transitioning to NG911 increases the financial burden because during the transition, state and local 911 authorities have to support the dual cost of operating the legacy 911 system while paying the capital costs to deploy NG911.

A matching funds program directed to paying one-time NG911 capital costs could help overcome this obstacle and speed the NG911 transition on a nationwide scale.

And while we're talking about funding, I should mention that you have a valuable new resource to help you develop new funding strategies. This is the Report that was just adopted by our Task Force on Optimal PSAP Architecture – TFOPA. The Report includes detailed recommendations on how to evolve sustainable funding models for NG911, as well as recommendations on how to get the biggest bang for the buck when allocating resources to NG911. There's a session about TFOPA on your agenda this afternoon that will go into more detail about this.

Second -- Integrate PSAPs into national-level cyber defense networks

We know that defending PSAPs from cyberattacks is a major challenge. Most states and local jurisdictions lack the resources to develop in-house cyber expertise or hire a cyber-trained workforce to protect PSAPs. Moreover, trying to build cyber defenses around individual PSAPs is a plain bad idea – it is incredibly inefficient and will actually increase vulnerability gaps throughout the system.

At the same time, there has been significant federal investment by DHS and others in national and regional cyber defenses that could be leveraged to add a layer of protection to the 911 system. We have suggested that 911 be integrated into this framework.

And once again, the TFOPA Report provides a potential blueprint for that integration. One of the working groups in the Task Force focused specifically on cybersecurity for PSAPs, and came up with some great recommendations that will be discussed in this afternoon's session.

Third -- Establish a national mapping database available to all PSAPs

Good mapping data is critical to PSAP operations, and mapping will be even more critical in the NG911 world, where virtually all routing and call location functions will be GIS map-driven.

To prepare for the NG911 transition, many states are already working to standardize their GIS mapping data. We also know that mapping for NG911 purposes will continue to require strong local participation to ensure accuracy of the data at the local level.

But providing some of these mapping resources at the national level could provide an important backstop for all PSAPs. It is also more cost-efficient and will help to make mapping data standardized and interoperable across jurisdictional borders. Finally, much of the national mapping data that could be used to support NG911 already exists, so we don't need to build it from scratch.

Fourth -- Federal auditing of state 911 fee payments by carriers

As documented in our annual 911 Fee Report, PSAP operations are primarily supported through state-level 911 fees paid by wireline, wireless, and VoIP providers. However, the Fee Report also confirms that many 911 authorities lack the audit tools to verify that providers are paying the required fees in full.

The idea we came up with is to have a federal-level process for auditing state 911 fee payments by service providers. This would provide a backstop for states that don't do their own audits and would be more efficient for service providers by subjecting them to a single national audit as opposed to multiple state audits. At the same time, any state that wanted to perform its own audit could still do so.

So there are four ideas for national-level action. But these are not ideas the Commission can implement unilaterally. Indeed, some of them wouldn't involve the Commission at all.

What we need to do is work together to forge a national commitment to make NG911 a reality nationwide, and to identify a target date for achieving that goal. I'm not here to tell you what that date should be, but it would be great to have the 911 community coalesce around a date for completing the transition.

Other FCC Activity on 911

As this indicates, we are committed to working together with the 911 community, industry, and our government partners to accelerate the NG911 transition.

We are also committed to making continued progress on specific Commission 911 initiatives that we have launched in the past couple of years. I'll just touch on a few of these briefly.

Location Accuracy

The Commission adopted the new wireless location accuracy rules a little over a year ago, and we have been pleased with the early signs of progress by the wireless industry towards meeting the new requirements.

Preliminary work is underway to develop the technology test bed, which our order requires to be launched by August 2016.

The wireless carriers have also started the planning process for the National Emergency Address Database (NEAD).

We will continue to monitor progress, and we encourage you to do so as well. The clock is ticking: by this time next year, carriers will have to begin providing live 911 call data from the six Test Cities, and the first location benchmark falls in April 2017, only 14 months away.

Text-to-911

We are encouraged by the progress that has occurred in the deployment of text-to-911 over the past year.

At the end of January, our Text-to-911 registry listed nearly 500 PSAPs that are supporting text-to-911. Moreover, those PSAPs cover over 20 percent of the U.S. population.

We also have reason to believe the true number of PSAPs supporting text-to-911 is higher, because not all of them have registered with us.

Still, we need to do better. In the past few months, we have seen an increasing number of media stories documenting that text-to-911 has saved lives. For example:

- A deaf woman who was able to text for help when she was having a heart attack
- A stranded hiker with a broken leg in a remote area that texted for help.
- A person who texted 911 to quietly summon help for her companion who was threatening to commit suicide.

These stories show how important it is that text-to-911 be available nationwide. The public's access to text-to-911 shouldn't depend on where they live.

911 Apps

In May 2015, the Bureau held a workshop on 911 apps, and we have been closely monitoring the ongoing evolution of apps since then.

We believe there is enormous potential for apps to augment and improve the technical and functional capabilities of 911 service, and to do so in the near term.

But we also need to make sure that such apps are designed and deployed responsibly. NENA and APCO have provided important guidelines to the app community to promote responsible development of

911 apps. We support these guidelines and strongly encourage app developers to abide by them. For example:

- Apps should not interfere with existing 911 systems or prevent the public from accessing 911 via a traditional voice call. (This is the “do no harm” principle.)
- We welcome competition and choice in the 911 app space, but 911 apps should deliver information to PSAPs using standard formats and interfaces, so that PSAPs do not have to develop cumbersome specialized processes for handling information from each individual app.
- Apps should also not impose additional costs on PSAPs to handle app-generated 911 calls or on consumers to access 911.

We have talked with many app developers over the past year, and have encouraged them to work closely with NENA, APCO, and the PSAP community throughout the design, testing, and deployment process. We understand that some of those app developers are here at this conference and see that as a very positive sign.

Integrating NG911 into the Broader Tech Transition

As we focus on 911 and NG911, we are also looking at the bigger picture of how to integrate the 911 system with other communications platforms that will serve public safety in the world of the IP tech transition.

One area of focus is how to integrate NG911 with FirstNet.

Another area of focus is the intersection between NG911 and emergency alerting.

With respect to FirstNet, the next year is critical, because FirstNet will be selecting a bidder on its RFP and will be developing its detailed network design and buildout plan. It is important that we “bake in” integration between FirstNet and 911 as part of this phase. This is also yet another reason why making early progress on the NG911 transition is crucial. If we can’t develop NG911 on a parallel timeline with FirstNet, integrating them later in the process will be more costly and difficult.

With respect to alerting, we need to develop a public safety communications model in which the “one-to-many” systems that support emergency alerts work hand-in-glove with the 911 system’s “many-to-one” capability. Our objective must be nothing less than building public safety communications platforms that are converged and interoperable so that information can pass across them seamlessly, reliably, and securely.

Supporting the 911 Workforce

Finally, though, let’s turn the spotlight away from technology and focus on the greatest asset of our 911 system – the workforce.

Last year during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, I wrote a blog in which I said the following:

“[T]he nation’s telecommunicators need a 911 system that keeps pace with technological advances, particularly as communications networks migrate to Next Generation technologies and consumers embrace smartphones and new communications applications. New technologies also bring opportunities to improve our 911 system, but they do not lessen the nation’s need for skilled telecommunicators. Even the best technology cannot replace the essential person-to-person connection offered by a 911 call-taker to a person in need or a dispatcher’s knowledge of the local community that is often critical to timely and effective response.”

That’s something we keep in mind every day.

During the coming year, we will step up our focus on workforce and training issues to help telecommunicators navigate the tech transition that is transforming the world for all of us.

We also have asked TFOPA to look more closely at workforce training and education in the second year of its charter.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to thank NENA's leadership and all of you for bringing your expertise and experience to our doorstep. This conference is very important for us and we always welcome the opportunity for partnership and dialogue.

I am also very proud of the progress we have made on so many issues in the past two years since I attended my first 911 Goes to Washington.

But we still have a lot of work to do. We at the Commission look forward to building on the progress we have made and achieving even greater things in the coming year. Thank you.

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