

**Remarks of  
David Furth, Acting Chief  
Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission  
at the  
Executive Session of the  
President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC)  
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Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to address the Executive Session of the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

The FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau oversees the FCC's regulations and policies in the areas of public safety communications, homeland security, disaster preparedness, and emergency management. As Acting Chief of the Bureau, I appreciate your willingness to allow me to stand in for FCC Acting Chairman Michael Copps, who regrets that he is unable to be with you today.

The Commission's public safety mission is to foster the development of rapid, reliable, and ubiquitous communications technologies to promote public safety and homeland security. Today, I would like to update you on our current activities in several key areas, and outline some of the initiatives we are planning for the future.

These areas include: 911, interoperability, broadband, protecting communications infrastructure, cyber security, ensuring the availability of communications as part of emergency preparedness and disaster response, and outreach on communications issues to the public safety community.

**I. Promoting Public Safety Communications**

**A. 911/E911**

One of the FCC's goals is to ensure that all Americans have the ability to use 911 to call for help, regardless of the technology they use to place the call. The public has come to depend on E911 emergency calling as a basic public safety service, and expects that it will have access to E911 on the

increasing number of wireless and Internet Protocol (IP)-based devices that are becoming generally available.

Today there are more than 270 million mobile telephone subscribers in the United States and for one in five households the wireless phone is now their only phone. Our E911 rules endeavor to ensure that all wireless users will have access to 911, and that when they call, first responders will receive automatic location information so that can quickly find the caller. The Commission is currently working on a proceeding to develop more refined location accuracy requirements for wireless service providers.

The Commission has also extended the availability of 911 services to new communications technologies, such as interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Last year, the Commission issued rules implementing the NET 911 Act that gave interconnected VoIP providers rights of access to any and all capabilities that are necessary to provide E911 service.

Finally, the FCC is coordinating with the Department of Transportation on its Next-Generation 9-1-1 programs, and is working with industry and standard setting groups to facilitate the smooth transition of E911 to new IP-based architectures.

## **B. Interoperability**

Another key Commission goal is to promote the development of interoperability as a key component of public safety radio systems.

We have been very active in this area, particularly focusing on ensuring that new spectrum bands dedicated to public safety will support new and enhanced interoperable communications. In the 700 MHz band, public safety will shortly have unfettered access as a result of the DTV transition occurring in just a few weeks. This will open up the band for widespread deployment of public safety narrowband systems, which are required under our rules to be interoperable. In addition, the Commission remains committed to development of a nationwide interoperable broadband public safety network in the 700 MHz band. As you will recall, the Commission previously allocated 10 MHz of commercial nationwide spectrum and 10 MHz of adjacent, nationwide public safety spectrum for a shared commercial and public

safety broadband network to be implemented by a public safety/private partnership. Although the 700 MHz auction did not produce a successful bidder for the commercial block, we remain committed to finding a solution that will facilitate a nationwide interoperable broadband public safety network. We are now engaged in a comprehensive staff-level review and analysis of options so that this issue can be taken up quickly by the new Commission.

We are also making progress in the rebanding of the 800 MHz band so that this band will also provide better opportunities for interoperable public safety communications. Although rebanding has taken longer than anticipated, over a third of public safety systems in non-border areas have now completed rebanding, most of the remaining two-thirds are now well under way in the process, and we are making progress in border areas as well.

Finally, the Bureau is working closely with other departments and agencies that are tasked with enhancing public safety interoperability, most notably the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) in DHS and the NTIA PSIC program. We work with these organizations to ensure that our interoperability rules work in harmony with their programs that promote and provide grant funding for interoperability planning and implementation.

### **C. Broadband**

Perhaps the Commission's greatest priority in the coming year (once the DTV transition is completed) will be the creation of a national broadband plan as required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Public safety broadband issues will be a key part of this process. Last month, the Commission released a Notice of Inquiry seeking comment on how to implement the plan required by the ARRA. In the NOI, the Commission included specific questions on how broadband can be used to enhance public safety and homeland security.

I have already mentioned the importance of the 700 MHz band to our public safety broadband efforts, but we are also looking at public safety broadband deployment in other bands. In April 2009, the Commission adopted rules designed to expand and enhance first responders' deployment of broadband

communication technologies in the 4.9 GHz band. These rules will enable first responders to more easily share time-sensitive data and streaming video footage in emergencies or life-threatening incidents.

## **II. Protection of Critical Infrastructure**

The Commission continues to work to facilitate the availability of a reliable, redundant, and resilient communications infrastructure. To further this goal, the Commission collects and analyzes network outage information, which allows us to perform analyses and studies of communications disruptions and rapidly identify areas where critical communications may be impaired.

We are also increasingly aware of the issue of cyber security as it affects our communications networks. In 2003, the Commission chartered the Network Reliability and Interoperability Council (NRIC) to develop best practices for securing interconnected networks. The NRIC subsequently established over 200 Best Practices to help service providers operate and protect networks from cyber attacks.

But much more work remains to be done. To continue this effort, the Commission recently rechartered the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC), the successor to the NRIC and MSRC. We are currently selecting members for this Council, which will begin meeting later this year. The purpose of CSRIC will be to provide recommendations to the FCC to ensure optimal security, reliability, and interoperability of communications systems, including public safety, telecommunications, and media communications.

The Commission has also sought comment in the Broadband Notice of Inquiry on the extent to which the national broadband plan should address the means to protect and advance cyber security, specifically with respect to those broadband networks essential to the nation's critical infrastructure, financial institutions, public safety and homeland security.

Finally, the Commission has provided information to the White House's recent 60-day interagency review of cyber security policies. Future Commission action will likely be guided by the conclusions and recommendations of the report that is generated as a result of this review.

### **III. Emergency Preparedness and Response**

The Commission has worked extensively with Federal, state, local, and tribal partners to improve emergency preparedness and response. For example, the Commission last year worked with NCS to launch the Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS), a web-based database designed to collect daily operational status and restoration information from the communications industry during major disasters and subsequent recovery efforts. Though carrier participation is voluntary, DIRS now has nearly 1,700 registered companies and includes contact information for almost 2,800 individuals. DIRS was activated three times during the hurricane season in 2008 and once in 2009 in response to ice storms in Kentucky. Many of the communications companies represented here today worked closely with us on the development and improvement of DIRS. Your support in this area has helped us to inform federal emergency management officials on the operational status of key communications systems and has been a tremendous aid in federal emergency response.

The Commission has also worked with the Department of Homeland Security and our other federal partners on other ways to improve our situational awareness during disasters. For example, with assistance and funding from FEMA, the Commission has developed scanning technology known as Project Roll Call. In the aftermath of a hurricane or other disaster, we can bring Roll Call units into the affected area to determine which radio-based systems are no longer operational and then check our licensing databases to determine which of these systems support essential personnel, such as first responders. We provide this information to FEMA, which sets priorities and makes federal resources available to rapidly restore essential communications systems. We deployed Roll Call units for the first time during last year's hurricane season and it proved to be a valuable tool for the federal response. We continue to work with FEMA to improve the system and to ensure that we have a sufficient number of Roll Call units to deploy wherever they are needed.

In addition, the Commission has designated 30 trained personnel to provide on-location emergency communications support during major federal deployments. Over the last two years, the Commission has been actively engaged with FEMA and other agencies to prepare, review, and validate

state and local emergency communications and operations plans. During this process, expert Commission staff conducted spectrum surveys and worked with public safety officials in the field to create and update more than a dozen state and local plans.

The Commission has also taken steps to promote the Federal Priority Communications Services – Telecommunications Service Priority, Wireless Priority Service, and Government Emergency Telecommunications Service. The Bureau, in coordination with NCS and other Federal agencies, continues to expand and improve these priority services, and promote best practices to ensure that public safety users are properly trained in how to use these services.

#### **IV. Outreach**

Since the creation of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, one of the Commission's top priorities has been to serve as an information clearinghouse for public safety and homeland security communications matters. To that end, the Bureau maintains a website that provides a wealth of information for first responders, 911 Call Centers, the health care sector, people with disabilities, and the communications industry. The website provides guidelines for developing emergency communication plans, best practices for use by the public safety community, case studies of the actual use of best practices, and sample emergency plans from jurisdictions around the country.

In another effort to provide information on public safety and homeland security issues, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau has hosted a number of summits over the last two years. Topics of recent summits have included Next Generation E911 Systems, Lessons Learned from the 2008 Hurricane Season, and Pandemic Preparedness.

The Commission continues to work closely with public safety organizations, industry, and other governmental agencies on a variety of public safety and homeland security communications issues. For example, the Commission has been actively engaged in a number of NSTAC Task Forces and is represented at the NCS National Coordinating Center. We also work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to ensure that hospitals, community health clinics, and state and

county health departments are able to communicate during a disaster, public health crisis, or other type of emergency.

In response to the outbreak of the H1N1 flu and in coordination with HHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we have mobilized our efforts under the National Response Framework to ensure that health officials have access to an operable, reliable, and robust communications infrastructure. As always, we stand ready to support our federal partners in their response to an emergency or pandemic and we believe that it is critical for the Commission to do everything possible to protect the lines of communications that are being used by public health officials and healthcare facilities during an emergency.

**V. Conclusion**

In sum, the Commission remains focused on its mission to ensure that public safety, defense, emergency personnel, and the public have reliable communications before, during, and after emergencies. I look forward to working with all of you, as we strive to achieve our public safety and homeland security goals together. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.