



# FDNY

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**Daniel A. Nigro**  
Fire Commissioner

September 22, 2016

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
425 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[Filed Electronically]

**Re: Needed Improvements to the Nation's Wireless Emergency Alert System**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department, I know firsthand that our city faces on a regular basis emergency situations that threaten or otherwise impact in a meaningful way the people of New York. It is the mission of the FDNY to provide exceptional service to our fellow New Yorkers in every area of the city, as well as to the millions who visit every year. A crucial component of that service is working with our partners in city government to provide quick and effective communication with residents, commuters, and visitors. This includes the distribution of public information regarding emergencies and significant events via phone calls, text messages, emails, and social media outreach.

For major emergencies that require broad public awareness and action, the City relies on the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) System. It has come to my attention that there are several critical deficiencies within the WEA System that must be corrected:

1. **Links and Photographs** – The WEA system should be upgraded to support the inclusion of hyperlinks and photographs so the public can either be directed to a dedicated website for more information and/or to see an image (e.g., photograph, map, etc.).
2. **Device-Assisted Geotargeting** – The WEA system needs to have improved geo-targeting capability so messages are delivered to the correct area with minimal overshoot or undershoot. Today's mobile phones have built in GPS technology that must be leveraged to improve accuracy.
3. **Multilingual Capability** – With more than 200 languages spoken in New York City, we must have the ability to communicate with people in languages other than English.

**Fire Department, City of New York**

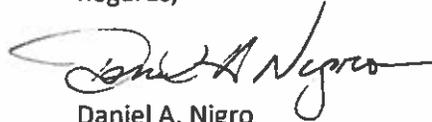
9 MetroTech Center, Brooklyn New York 11201-3857

4. **“Many-to-One” Capability** – The WEA system needs to be upgraded to capture feedback from the population that receives the alert. The ability to rapidly capture information from the general public would improve our ability to deliver emergency services in an efficient and effective manner.

As we have learned time and again – including as recently as this past Saturday, when members of the FDNY and other agencies responded to a bombing in the Chelsea neighborhood and subsequently to other locations throughout the city in connection with that event – it is vital that the City is able to communicate with the public in an accurate and efficient manner. The WEA system is key piece of the emergency public information strategy, but the current system requires significant improvements in order to be truly effective.

I strongly encourage you to adopt the above recommendations in the forthcoming Rule and Order.

Regards,



Daniel A. Nigro  
Fire Commissioner