



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico Telecommunications Bureau
President's Office

November 20, 2018

Hon. Ajit Pai

Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

The Puerto Rico Telecommunications Bureau (PRTB), hereby submit its comments regarding the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau proceeding under PS Docket No. 15-80, 04-35, about the benefits and concerns of sharing and protecting NORS/DIRS data information.

After our recent experience with Hurricanes Irma and María in Puerto Rico, we can affirm that the major causes of communications outages were the loss of power, cuts to fiber and the theft of copper. Being the geographic location of the Island and its topography the principal factor that affected the outages and/or resilience.

The effects of the communications outages were that the government was uncommunicated, including agencies that provide essential services to the people, like Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA), Puerto Rico Ports Authority, Department of Public Security, Department of Security of Puerto Rico, which responds in all emergency related affairs. Also, the citizens access to those emergency agencies was highly affected.

From the PRTB perspective as the regulatory entity and as leader of the Emergency Support Function # 2 (ESF # 2), in charge of telecommunication support functions, immediately the Governor declare a state of emergency, we activate our emergency protocol. An Emergency Operations Center at our facilities is in function, coordinating with all the designated personnel from the telecommunications companies assuring that they are prepared to manage any situation, and that working together with the PRTB any situation that needs to be handle with other agencies of the government would be correctly and timely channeled.



The PRTB signed a Cooperation Agreement together with the Telecommunications Industry Committee for Emergency Management (CITME), constituted by the representatives of all the telecommunications and cable television companies operating in Puerto Rico, with the purpose of joining forces between public and private entities in order to restore and protect the telecommunications and cable television infrastructure, and satisfy communication priorities arising from reason of disasters or emergencies. This Committee was recently required by an amendment to our Law, by Act 211-2018.

In the matter of Puerto Rico, we have emphasized that the information provided by the FCC, through DIRS was helpful. Nonetheless, the PRTB had to issue an Administrative Order, on October 10, 2017, ordering the companies certified and registered by it, to provide more detailed information on the recovery of critical telecommunications infrastructure, daily until the Board provide otherwise, indicating that said information will be handled in a confidential manner. In the same way, the Administrative Order requested the plans of lifting of the individual telecommunications of each provider (healing plans), with the purpose of visualizing the progress in the reconstruction works of the infrastructure and the telecommunications service, which populate some maps that are updated daily.

The PRTB believes that DIRS should be mandatory and provide data coverage in the affected areas, as well as shared with the states. We also believed that the information reported on NORS by the companies, which is mandatory, should be share with the states regulatory agencies. Access to NORS/DIRS information will be an essential tool, in their respective instances, to coordinate assistance to the companies and to emergency governmental agencies, in order to restore the communications services and assist the citizens that are affected by the outage.

We are aware that there are some elements that needs to be addressed in order to share the NORS/DIRS information, regarding the security and protection of the information that will be shared, establishing procedures that will apply in the event of a data breach, as: notification, protection of the data, and the training necessary, required by the FCC, to the personnel that will be working directly with the information. The PRTB knows the importance of maintaining and assuring the confidentiality of the information to be shared and is more than willing to comply with any requirement the FCC deems necessary.

The PRTB is used to handle and protect confidential information received by the companies under our jurisdiction, as required by Act 213-1996, as amended, known as telecommunications Law of Puerto Rico of 1996. We would like to assure that the PRTB have the necessary personnel to work and interpret the technical information of NORS/DIRS, we have engineers and technical staff with expert knowledge in telecommunications.



We hope that our comments are considered as to the need and importance of sharing the NORS / DIRS information with states utilities.

Sincerely,


Sandra E. Torres López, Esq.
Chairwoman PRTB

c: Associate Members of PRTRB