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BEFORE THE

Federal Communications Commission

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems	)	CC Docket No. 94-102
	)	RM-8143
	)	

To: The Commission

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COMMENTS OF STARSYS GLOBAL POSITIONING, INC.

STARSYS Global Positioning, Inc. ("STARSYS"), by its attorneys and pursuant to Sections 1.415 and 1.419 of the Commission's rules, hereby submits its comments in response to the above-captioned notice of proposed rulemaking, Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems, FCC 94-237 (released October 19, 1994) ("NPRM"). STARSYS, which is a charter applicant for authority to establish a satellite system in the new Non-Voice, Non-Geostationary Mobile Satellite Service ("NVNG MSS"), limits its comments to the questions the Commission asked in Paragraph 38 of the NPRM. Specifically, STARSYS responds to the Commission's inquiry as to appropriate scope of the Enhanced 911 ("E-911") compatibility obligation to be imposed on mobile radio service providers. For the reasons stated below, STARSYS urges the Commission not to include either NVNG MSS system operators or entities that provide NVNG MSS capacity to end users within the scope of the E-911 obligations.

In its NPRM, the Commission proposed that users of mobile radio service on the public switched telephone network ultimately have the same level of access to 911 emergency services as wireline callers do and will have. NPRM, FCC 94-237, slip op. at ¶ 37. As a threshold matter, however, the Commission recognized

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that it must define the categories of mobile radio services that should be subjected to compatibility requirements with respect to E-911 services. Id. at ¶ 38. The Commission stated its "initial view" that the appropriate line of demarcation might be to limit E-911 obligations to those mobile radio services that offer "real-time voice services . . . on the public switched network . . . ." Id.

Without taking a position on the other types of mobile radio services, if any, that should be subjected to E-911 compatibility obligations, STARSYS agrees with the Commission's initial view that imposition of the obligations on non-voice mobile radio services such as the NVNG MSS would not be appropriate. One need only to look at the nature of the NVNG MSS to appreciate why this is the case.

As described in the NPRM, the most critical and subjective point in the emergency services pipeline occurs at the Public Safety Answering Point ("PSAP"), where professional operators assist callers in need of emergency assistance and direct the appropriate response from police, fire, and health emergency service providers. NPRM, FCC 94-237, slip op. at ¶ 4. It is at the PSAP where interrogation of callers to ascertain the nature of the emergency occurs, and where the direction and prioritization of the appropriate emergency response is determined. The ability of PSAP staffers to speak with callers is essential both to the completion of their tasks and to the maximization of the efficient use of emergency service resources. If parties using NVNG MSS capacity to provide mobile radio services to end users were required to have E-911 compatibility, it would deprive PSAP operators of at least one of the primary tools at their disposal -- interrogation -- and would very likely lead to

the inefficient and perhaps fatally counterproductive deployment of emergency personnel and resources.

First of all, and unlike their wireline and cellular counterparts, NVNG MSS users will likely not have numbers that will be compatible with any of the leading Automatic Number Identification ("ANI") formats. Users will also not typically, if ever, be included within any external Automatic Location Identification ("ALI") database. With the STARSYS NVNG MSS system, for example, users will generally be assigned access codes by the mobile radio service providers (whether commercial mobile radio service or not) that will enable the system to direct their transmissions. These codes will be meaningless to anyone outside the system.[1/]

In addition, the user terminals associated with NVNG MSS systems will have only limited messaging capability. A limitation to roughly 50 alphanumeric characters per message, combined with the technical limitations the Commission has imposed on the frequency of NVNG MSS transmissions (see 47 C.F.R. § 2.106,

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1/ For example, in most cases a STARSYS customer will use a coded system for retrieving the information it desires in a condensed form; for instance, a letter representing a temperature range on a piece of remotely located cargo or equipment. Thus, in many situations, the customer itself will be the only entity capable of determining if a message is indeed describing an emergency situation, and even then, the customer may not know what the situation is from the brief data it is receiving. Because neither STARSYS nor its NVNG MSS-provider customers will normally have access to the processed message information being disseminated, the customer is the only entity capable of determining from a message whether an situation requiring an emergency response exists. Neither the NVNG MSS operator, nor the User Service Application Center ("USAC") to which the subject message is sent for processing, and in some instances not even the customer itself, will have the information required to initiate an meaningful emergency call to a PSAP.

Footnote US323) will severely constrain the ability of emergency personnel to "converse" with "callers" to ascertain the nature of the emergency and the type and speed of the response required, particularly when low numbers of satellites are available to establish connectivity. The very real limitation of this capability from an emergency preparedness point of view is that PSAP operators may, on the basis of spotty or incomplete information, deploy emergency resources that may be inappropriate for the situation, thereby removing those resources from service for perhaps extended periods of time. Such a result would clearly be inimical to the objectives the Commission is attempting to achieve in this proceeding.[2/]

Finally, there is the reality that the NVNG MSS operator and its associated message processing stations (the USAC facilities in the case of the STARSYS system) will be processing messages received from users up to 3000 miles distant from the receiving ground station. The sheer remoteness of these facilities to most users runs contrary to the Commission's notion that E-911 is a local service

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2/ To be sure, NVNG MSS systems will be capable of offering public safety services, and some such applications by mobile service providers are bound to develop. In these cases, STARSYS envisions that the NVNG MSS service provider will receive a transmission that may include a call for emergency services, and will either provide those services itself or route a request for service through the customer agency that will be prepared to deal with such situations. For example, a hiker that is stranded in a remote area of a state or national park can use a STARSYS transceiver he was issued upon his entrance into the park to alert the park rangers, who will then be able to locate the hiker through the system and provide or call for the appropriate assistance. Similarly, a STARSYS transceiver that is attached to equipment monitoring the integrity of a remote fuel pipeline can transmit to the pipeline company notice of a rupture; company officials will be in a much better position to determine the nature of the emergency and alert the relevant local PSAP operators.

requiring a local response (see NPRM, FCC 94-237, slip op. at ¶ 57), and renders it practically impossible both to locate the appropriate agency to direct the response and to identify the appropriate response itself. The end user of the NVNG MSS service, by contrast, is much more likely to have a directory of emergency services in the area from which the emergency or non-standard message originated, and is in a much stronger position to initiate the emergency response process.

In its Report and Order establishing the NVNG MSS, the Commission recognized the potential of NVNG MSS services to complement existing safety services. It stated, however, "that the NVNG services are not intended to replace existing international safety services and cannot be used in lieu of distress beacons, such as emergency locator transmitters or emergency position indicating radio beacons that are required to be carried by international agreement or statute."[3/] The Commission determined not to impose mandatory requirements that would require NVNG MSS systems to determine the grid coordinates of distress signals received, ascertain and direct messages to appropriate search and rescue organizations, and design the communications interface with search and rescue organizations to utilize the public switched data network. It was sufficient that NVNG MSS system operators that chose to offer distress communications capabilities would coordinate their efforts with appropriate organizations.[4/] STARSYS believes that such a voluntary approach

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3/ Amendment of the Commission's Rules to Establish Rules and Policies Pertaining to a Non-Voice, Non-Geostationary Mobile Satellite Service, 8 FCC Rcd 8450, 8458 (1993).

4/ Id.

to the issue of E-911 compatibility is the appropriate solution in this proceeding with respect to the NVNG MSS.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, STARSYS urges the Commission to conclude that it would be inappropriate for NVNG MSS system operators, and or entities providing NVNG MSS capacity to end users, to be subjected to any mandatory obligation to provide E-911 compatibility. NVNG MSS systems can and most likely will play an important role in many types of emergency responses; it simply is the case that, for a series of technical and practical reasons, it would be counterproductive to the laudable ends the Commission is attempting to achieve in this proceeding for such systems to be required to be compatible with E-911 operations.

Respectfully submitted,

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