

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Report on Technical and Operational) WT Docket No. 02-46
Issues Impacting the Provision)
Of Wireless Enhanced 911 Services)

To: Chief, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau

REPLY COMMENTS OF DOBSON CELLULAR SYSTEMS, INC.

Dobson Cellular Systems, Inc. (“Dobson”), on behalf of its subsidiaries and affiliates, hereby submits reply comments with respect to the *Hatfield Report*.¹ Dobson’s experience confirms the unique challenges facing rural wireless carriers in deploying E911 services, as noted by the *Hatfield Report* and recognized by commenters in this proceeding.² For the reasons discussed below, Dobson respectfully suggests that the record developed here should lead the Commission to revise the E911 accuracy requirements applicable to carriers serving rural areas or, at minimum, to affirm the need for flexibility.

¹ Public Notice, *Wireless Telecommunications Bureau Seeks Comment on Report on Technical and Operational Wireless E911 Issues*, WT Docket No. 02-46, DA 02-2666 (rel. Oct. 16, 2002); *A Report on Technical and Operational Issues Impacting The Provision of Wireless Enhanced 911 Services* (“*Hatfield Report*”).

² *See id.* at 12; Comments of Rural Cellular Corporation (“RCC”) at 2-3; Comments of Rural Telecommunications Group (“RTG”) at 2.

I. THE FCC'S E911 ACCURACY REQUIREMENTS MUST ACCOMMODATE THE HURDLES THAT PERSIST FOR CARRIERS SERVING RURAL AREAS

As the Commission is aware, Dobson is a mid-sized provider of commercial mobile wireless services in rural and suburban areas throughout the country. Like many carriers serving rural areas with TDMA-based networks, however, Dobson has been forced to seek relief from the FCC's E911 rules due to the limited availability of compliant products and vendor support. As the *Hatfield Report* recognizes and several commenters have confirmed, despite the relief afforded to non-nationwide carriers like Dobson,³ rural carriers continue to face basic technical and operational issues with E911 deployment not faced by the larger carriers.⁴ In particular, the Commission's accuracy requirements remain a major hurdle for rural carriers.

Dobson agrees with commenters that a network-based E911 solution that relies on triangulation and operates in rural terrain with low site density (or in small isolated markets with very few cell sites) is unlikely to meet the current accuracy requirements in the near term.⁵ Furthermore, simply upgrading to newer technologies will not solve the problem for rural TDMA carriers. Even carriers like Dobson, who are migrating to a

³ See *Revision of the Commission's Rules To Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems*, CC Docket No. 94-102, 17 FCC Rcd 14841 (2002) ("*Phase II Order to Stay*").

⁴ See *Hatfield Report* at 12 (noting that although most carriers' focus is on actual implementation of E911, rural/smaller carriers continue to evaluate and develop solutions to meet Commission's requirements); see also Comments of RCC at 2-3; Comments of RTG at 2.

⁵ See Comments of RCC at 2-3; Comments of RTG at 2-3. Dobson also agrees that it would be uneconomical, wasteful, and impose an excessive regulatory burden for the Commission to require rural carriers to build additional sites solely for deployment of E911 service. See Comments of RCC at 2; Comments of RTG at 3; Comments of PetroCom License Corporation ("*PetroCom*") at 4.

next generation network overlay (e.g., GSM), must retain their TDMA networks for a significant period in order to provide any level of ubiquitous service and E911 support to the significant embedded base of TDMA customers. Therefore, despite the joint assertion by National Emergency Number Association (“NENA”), Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International (“APCO”), and National Association of State Nine One One Administrators (“NASNA”) that certain carriers have “clung to questionable location solutions,”⁶ TDMA-based carriers must continue to rely on the best network-based solutions available so as to avoid cutting customers off from E911 services altogether.

The Commission’s record on E911 deployment issues clearly shows that relief from the accuracy standards may be required in some circumstances.⁷ The *Hatfield Report* appropriately recommends to the Commission that it remain flexible and “continu[e] to adjust its actual [E911] rules to fit specific circumstances as appropriate.”⁸ Dobson supports those commenters who have urged the Commission to modify the accuracy requirements or adopt a “rural” accuracy standard.⁹ Like RCC, Dobson encourages the Commission to follow through on its commitment to consider in a

⁶ Joint Comments of NENA, APCO, and NANSNA at 4.

⁷ The Commission has stated in its *Phase II Order to Stay* that it will consider whether relief from the accuracy standards is warranted on a case-by-case basis provided that certain criteria are met. *Phase II Order to Stay* at ¶ 41.

⁸ *Hatfield Report* at 46.

⁹ See Comments of RCC at 3-4; Comments of RTG at 3. Dobson also shares concern that the current guidelines for measuring E911 accuracy disadvantage rural carriers that are unable to use results from adjacent urban areas to average out less accurate results in rural areas. See Comments of RCC at 3; Comments of RTG at 2-3; Comments of PetroCom at 4-5; see also *Hatfield Report* at 36.

separate proceeding the revised accuracy standard set forth by Edge Wireless.¹⁰ At a minimum, the Commission must be mindful of the difficulties rural carriers face and be flexible in determining whether rule changes or further relief in particular cases are warranted.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Dobson supports those commenters in this proceeding who have urged the Commission to modify the E911 accuracy requirements applicable to carriers that serve rural areas.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹⁰ See *Phase II Order to Stay* at ¶ 41; Comments of RCC at 3.