

August 20, 2012

Via Electronic Filing

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
225 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Ex Parte* Presentation, PS Docket Nos. 10-255 & 11-153

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On August 16, 2012, Brian Josef, Assistant Vice President, Regulatory Affairs, CTIA–The Wireless Association® (“CTIA”) and Matthew Gerst, Counsel, External & State Affairs, CTIA met with David Turetsky, David Furth, and Patrick Donovan of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission” or “FCC”) to discuss the Commission’s next steps in the proceeding referenced above. Specifically, CTIA noted wireless service providers’ discussions about offering wireless subscribers the ability to deliver a short message service (“SMS”) to an appropriate public safety answering point (“PSAP”) and an automatic SMS message reply in areas where such services are not available.

CTIA shares the Commission’s goal of ensuring that Americans, including the deaf, hard of hearing, and speech impaired communities, can effectively use wireless devices and services to contact publicly available emergency services. Consistent with its comments and reply comments in the above-captioned proceeding,¹ CTIA reviewed the steps that are being considered to help achieve this goal within the framework of the Commission’s authority. The wireless industry, including CTIA’s member companies, continues to discuss whether it is technically, economically, and operationally feasible to incorporate wireless service provider’ SMS services into 9-1-1 emergency communication systems (i.e. SMS-to-911). However, and as discussed in CTIA’s filings in this proceeding, there are significant technical, operational and policy challenges that must be addressed by the industry, public safety community and the Commission before SMS-to-911 services can or should be deployed.

Specifically, CTIA highlighted the technical complexity of utilizing the existing SMS network architecture to route an SMS to the appropriate PSAP and noted that efforts are underway to develop a standards based approach. CTIA also highlighted the operational limitations inherent to SMS that are incomparable to traditional voice calling as an emergency communications service. Standards work will also need to be completed to support expected features of wireless 9-1-1 services, such as location information.

¹ See Comments of CTIA – The Wireless Association®, PS Docket Nos. 10-255 and 11-153 (Dec. 12, 2011); Reply Comments of CTIA – The Wireless Association®, PS Docket Nos. 10-255 and 11-153 (Feb. 9, 2012).

Another issue that must be addressed in the course of evaluating an interim text-to-911 framework is liability protection for entities involved in the provision of text-to-911. Such protection is particularly important in light of the well-documented technical shortcomings of SMS as an emergency communications solution.² CTIA remains concerned that existing liability protections at the federal and state level may not be sufficient or consistent enough to provide the wireless industry, the public safety community, and other stakeholders the certainty need to offer SMS-to-911.

Consistent with CTIA's comments and reply comments in this proceeding, CTIA also noted that significant questions remain with regard to the Commission's claims of legal authority to require wireless service providers to support text-to-911. As a general matter, the Commission's authority to regulate SMS is extremely limited because SMS is properly classified as an information service. More specifically, the theories of authority presented in the NPRM may not establish that the Commission has a clear jurisdictional basis to adopt regulations relating to text-based communications to 9-1-1, including SMS.

Finally, CTIA discussed the significant challenge the industry and public safety community will face in educating the public – who have well-established expectations about wireless 9-1-1 voice services – about the capabilities and limitations of any interim text-to-911 solution. The Commission, the wireless industry, and members of the public safety and accessibility communities must work together to develop and implement a consistent and appropriate public education campaign before SMS-to-911 can be deployed. As a technological solution to this issue, CTIA discussed how an automatic “bounce-back” SMS message may be sent to wireless subscribers that attempt to send an SMS to the three digit code “911” in an area where such services are not available.

Pursuant to Section 1.1206 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206, this letter is being electronically filed via ECFS with your office and a copy of this submission is being provided to the meeting attendees. Please direct any questions to the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Josef
Assistant Vice President, Regulatory Affairs
CTIA – The Wireless Association®

Cc: Patrick Donovan
David Furth
David Turetsky

² See *Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation Applications, Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 11-134 ¶ 53 (Sept. 22, 2011).