



June 20, 2013

***Ex Parte Notice***

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

***In the Matter of Improving 9-1-1 Reliability, PS Docket No. 13-75; Reliability and Continuity of Communications Network, Including Broadband Technology, PS Docket No. 11-60***

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On June 18, 2013, John McHugh, Technical Advisor, Jesse Ward, Industry & Policy Analysis Manager, Matt Germain, Legal Intern, and the undersigned, on behalf of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association (“NTCA”), met with Jeffery Goldthorp, Michael Connelly, John Healy, Lauren Kravetz, Cecilia Mateo, and Eric Schmidt of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to discuss matters in the above-referenced proceedings.

NTCA noted that communications service providers have a strong interest and essential responsibility to ensure that citizens can access 9-1-1 services at all times, especially during disasters, attacks, or other emergencies. However, consistent with NTCA’s comments in the above referenced proceedings, we urged the Federal Communications Commission (the “Commission”) to consider the unique circumstances of small rural operators – and the emergency responders located in the areas they serve – as it considers implementing new minimum standards for reliability and resiliency.

In particular, we explained that rural local exchange carriers (“RLECs”) have limited control and typically do not interconnect directly with Public Safety Answering Points (“PSAPs”), instead relying upon limited transport options that may be available from the small towns and countryside they serve to connect to selective routers maintained by other carriers. Due to challenging terrain, geographic distances, and limited customer bases over which to spread the costs, it can be both difficult and cost-prohibitive for RLECs to provide physical diversity as a matter of course in connection with such links and other monitoring and control links. Moreover, given that in many cases only a portion of the transport to the selective router may be owned and operated by the RLEC (with the remainder controlled by the other carrier partner), it may be impossible for the RLEC to obtain physically diverse facilities to the selective router in those circumstances. NTCA noted that if an RLEC cannot provide physical diversity, logical diversity, through redundancy in the electronics, might be considered an alternative. We also highlighted that, in some cases, the RLEC may provide direct connections (that are almost always non-diverse) as requested by first responder facilities in rural areas (*e.g.*, fire stations, ambulance companies, justice centers) in addition to or in lieu of any connections to a PSAP through the applicable selective router.

In regard to backup power, we explained that NTCA members already maintain sufficient backup power to accommodate rural emergencies and comply with local regulations, and, as a result, additional regulation is not needed. However, NTCA agreed to gather more information in regard to state and local

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regulations that may dictate affirmative mandates for backup power requirements and the maximum amount of fuel that can be stockpiled for future use.

NTCA also noted that the Commission should build upon the efforts of the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (“CSRIC”) by installing a certification regime to enable service providers to annually certify that their 911 network services and facilities comply with the applicable industry-defined best practices administered through and updated periodically by CSRIC. NTCA would look forward to working with the Commission to develop a reasonable certification process that meets important objectives but is also appropriately tailored for the unique circumstances faced by smaller providers operating in very rural areas.

Pursuant to Section 1.1206 of the Commission’s rules, a copy of this letter is being filed via ECFS. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael R. Romano

Michael R. Romano

Senior Vice President - Policy

cc: Michael Connelly  
Jeffery Goldthorp  
Lauren Kravetz  
Cecilia Mateo  
Eric Schmidt