



January 5, 2018

Chairman Ajit Pai
Commissioner Brendan Carr
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
445 12th Street SW
Washington DC 20554

Mr. Chairman and Commissioners,

As you are likely aware, the emergency management and public safety community have been working with the Federal Communications Commission and wireless industry partners on improving the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system to support the nation’s evolving emergency messaging needs. The requested enhancements include, improved geo-targeting, multimedia alerting, “many-to-one” feedback, and multilingual alerting. All of the organizations that have signed on to this letter appreciate the efforts the Commission and the industry have taken thus far but write today, in light of recent emergencies, to underscore the critical need for these improvements to be instituted no later than May of 2019. Many of the requested enhancements have been under discussion for the last several years, some longer, and it is now time for action.

Device-based Geo-targeting - The ability to geo-target WEA is a necessity for public safety to effectively protect its citizens. Phones are capable of precise geo-targeting today and WEA must have access to these capabilities. Without the ability to geo-target our alert originators will continue to use WEA sparingly or not at all. This is a shame. An effective WEA can literally mean the difference between life and death. We encourage you to establish a deadline to implement device-based geo-targeting no later than May of 2019.

In conversations with the carriers it is clear that an accuracy of 1/10th of a mile is feasible.

This is all doable given the software and technology that's already in our hands. WEA-enabled devices already have the technology they need to add device-based discrimination. The wireless industry can update the software in the devices to incorporate existing features and functionality that will allow the device to use its location to decide if the device should display or not display the message.

Multimedia Alerts - Being able to incorporate multimedia into WEA messages will better allow the general public to understand and more quickly access information during an emergency including, but not limited to, photographs of abducted children, wanted systems, evacuation maps, and infographics. Multimedia will also improve the understandability of messages for individuals with limited English proficiency.

"Many-to-One" Feedback - Allowing consumers to respond to polling questions issued by emergency management/public safety would allow responders to quickly aggregate disaster impact information and more efficiently deploy scarce resources.

Multilingual Messaging - With hundreds of languages spoken in densely populated jurisdictions, emergency managers need broader capability for multilingual messaging beyond English and Spanish.

The emergency management and public safety community and those we protect have been waiting too long for WEA improvements.

In summary, please establish an implementation requirement no later than May 2019. Establishing this date provides the industry more than a year to implement solutions that have already been thoroughly discussed. Going beyond May 2019 puts our community at risk for more dry seasons (fire)/storm seasons (hurricanes) that claim lives. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,



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Director, City of Seattle Office of Emergency Management



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