**Remarks of Lisa Fowlkes**

**Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau**

**APCO General Business Session**

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**Introduction**

Thank you so much for that kind introduction, Derek [Poarch], and thank you, Martha Carter, for your leadership as APCO President. It’s a privilege to address APCO and its members. We at the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau appreciate the leadership role that APCO has taken with respect to so many important public safety issues, and the key contributions you have made in our proceedings and on our advisory committees.

Although I know many of you and am not new to public safety or the Commission, this is the first time I have had the privilege to attend an APCO conference. So for those of you that don’t know me, let me quickly introduce myself.

I have been at the FCC for over 25 years, serving in several different Bureaus including the Wireless Bureau and the Enforcement Bureau. I was one of the original members of the Public Safety Bureau leadership team when the Bureau was formed in 2006. I have served as a Deputy Chief in the Bureau for four different Bureau Chiefs, including Derek Poarch when he was Bureau Chief from 2007 to 2009, and I was honored when Chairman Pai selected me as Bureau Chief a year and a half ago.

Oh, and if you haven’t heard, I am a proud native of Philadelphia and a proud Eagles fan. I often draw inspiration from my background, including my paternal grandfather who served as a police detective in Philly. And I look forward to the Eagles winning another Super Bowl championship, no matter what the so-called odds makers here in Las Vegas may have to say about that.

Since I became Bureau Chief, I have focused on leading the Bureau on a number of the Commission’s public safety priorities. One of the most important aspects of that process is working collaboratively and engaging all stakeholders in the public safety community, and industry. Ultimately, we’re all working toward the same goal of keeping the public safe, and we need to continue to work together.

Now, I’d like to report on some of the FCC’s key activities, including efforts to speed emergency response and deliver life-saving aid to the public.

**911**

First, this has been a big year for 911. The nation celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first 911 call, and two significant pieces of 911 legislation were enacted into law: Kari’s Law and the “dispatchable location” provision of Ray Baum’s Act. The Commission, too, has been active on multiple 911 issues – I’ll highlight just a few.

Location Accuracy

On the issue of location accuracy, we recently passed the three-year milestone under the wireless indoor location accuracy rules that the Commission adopted in 2015. That three-year mark is significant because we are now opening the next frontier of indoor location – vertical location or the “z” axis. Last Friday, the major wireless carriers submitted their report on z-axis testing to the Commission along with their proposal for a z-axis metric. It is obviously premature for me to comment on the carriers’ proposal, but we are studying it closely, as I know you are. I can assure you we will provide an opportunity for public comment as the Commission moves towards adoption of a final vertical accuracy metric, and we welcome the comments of APCO and its members on this issue.

Location-Based Routing

Also relating to location, the Commission in March issued a Notice of Inquiry on the feasibility of location-based routing for wireless 911 calls. This is an important issue for many 911 call centers that have to transfer 911 calls because the cell tower used to route the call is often in a different jurisdiction from the caller’s location. The good news is that location technology is not only getting better, it’s getting faster, so it may soon be possible to route these calls based on caller location rather than tower location. This would reduce the number of call transfers and lead to faster response times.

Multi-Line Telephone Systems and Dispatchable Location

Aside from wireless location issues, our 911 portfolio has been expanded by the passage of Kari’s Law and Ray Baum’s Act. Kari’s Law mandates that callers using multi-line telephone systems must be able to dial 911 directly, and confers authority on the Commission to enforce the law’s requirements. Ray Baum’s Act requires the Commission to complete a rulemaking on 911 dispatchable location within 18 months. Of course, “dispatchable location” is a familiar term to all of you, because APCO was a leader in making it an integral part of the Commission’s 2015 wireless location accuracy rules. Now Congress has directed the FCC to -- and I quote -- “consider adopting rules to ensure that the dispatchable location is conveyed with a 9-1-1 call, *regardless of the technological platform used.*” Those last six words are important, because they signal that Congress is asking whether dispatchable location can be provided for *all* 911 calls, including MLTS calls and calls on other platforms.

So what are next steps for implementing Kari’s Law and Ray Baum’s Act? Stay tuned. Congress has said we need to start a rulemaking and complete it by September 2019, so we’re hard at work, and you’ll be hearing more about this soon.

**Emergency Alerting**

At the same time that so much is happening with 911, this has been just as big a year for our emergency alerting agenda. The Commission continues to push for improvements to the emergency system by engaging stakeholders and leveraging technological advances, and we are glad to see that APCO has become an active participant in our alerting proceedings. Here are just a few highlights:

Wireless Emergency Alerts

First, earlier this year, the Commission required carriers to begin upgrades to the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system to improve the geographic targeting of alerts and the information provided in those alerts.

* **Under the new rules, the major** wireless providers must support "clickable" embedded links in alerts. This means that the recipient of an alert may click on a URL to see a photo of a missing child, for instance.
* **B**y May 2019, participating wireless providers must support alert messages of 360 characters, Spanish-language messages, consumer-facing tests of WEA, and a new Public Safety alert message category.
* By July 2019, carriers will be delivering Blue Alerts over WEA to help protect the nation’s law enforcement officers.
* And by November 2019, participating wireless providers must improve geo-targeting by delivering alerts with no more than a tenth of a mile overshoot from the affected area specified by alert originators.

Emergency Alert System

We are also improving the reliability and effectiveness of the Emergency Alert System, which transmits alerts over broadcast, cable, and other media. Just a couple of weeks ago, the Commission adopted an order that will lead to important EAS improvements:

* The order authorizes “live code” testing of EAS, which enables testing of the same alert codes and processes that would be used in actual emergencies, but also requires clear messaging and outreach to make sure the public knows they are receiving a test message, not an actual emergency alert.
* To further enhance public awareness, the order permits public safety authorities to issue Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about EAS. These PSAs can even include the tones that precede an actual EAS alert, provided that the PSA includes a clear disclaimer that the tones are not signaling a real alert.
* To reduce the risk of false alerts, the order requires new safeguards in the configuration of EAS equipment and also requires broadcasters, cable systems, and other EAS participants to notify the Commission’s 24/7 operations center they discover they have transmitted a false alert.

National WEA and EAS Test on September 20

To ensure reliability, the FCC and our partner, FEMA, remain committed to regular testing of our alerting systems at the nationwide as well as the state and local level. On September 20, FEMA, in coordination with the FCC, will conduct a nationwide test of both EAS and WEA – the first time both systems have been part of a joint nationwide test.

**Public Safety Spectrum**

Finally, let me touch on public safety spectrum – the issue that has been a core focus of APCO’s advocacy for so many years.

Let’s start with FirstNet, which has made tremendous progress in the past year. The launch of FirstNet’s network is already re-shaping public safety communications by introducing new broadband opportunities for first responders and spurring competition in the marketplace that benefits public safety users. Going forward, we will continue to work with FirstNet to support its important mission.

Another major area of focus for us is the 4.9 GHz band. In March, the Commission issued a *Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* proposing rule changes intended to encourage greater use, improve spectrum efficiency, and promote investment in the band. We received numerous comments in this proceeding in early July, including comments from APCO, and reply comments were due yesterday, August 6th. We are now starting to review the comment record now, and I can assure you that we will consider APCO’s views carefully in that process.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I could go on about many other things that the Bureau is working on, but let me stop here and thank APCO’s members for the work you do on the front lines of public safety every day. We know how challenging and important this work is, and we are committed to helping you have access to the best communications tools available. I am confident that significant improvements to location accuracy, emergency alerting, and first responder communications will continue. But just as APCO’s participation has been critical to the formulation of FCC rules and policies, your continued involvement – and that of your local members -- is essential to ensure that emergency response improves in all of our communities.

We look forward to working with APCO and the entire 911 and emergency response community to achieve that vision.

Thank you for letting me speak with you today.