

**Opening Statement for Chairman Richard Hudson
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Public Safety Communications in the United States”
Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at 10:15 AM**

Introduction

Good morning, and welcome to today’s hearing on the state of public safety communications in the United States. I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses about the needs of our first responders and how to improve communications for public safety.

I want to start by recognizing our Chief Counsel, Kate Harper, as she starts a new job after an awesome career on the Hill, six of those years with our great Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Kate has a lot to be proud of in her time here – finding a nearly impossible deal for our spectrum auction in this year’s reconciliation bill, working on keeping our kids safe from TikTok’s Chinese ownership, and finding ways to expand broadband for all Americans.

She has been invaluable to the progress and growth of our subcommittee and sub members and I know I can contribute much of our success to her.

I'm so looking forward to seeing her grow in her career and more importantly what is next for her and her family. Thank you Kate!

Communications systems are crucial for our public safety organizations. Our first responders need reliable connections to be able to answer calls for help.

We have unfortunately experienced many instances where our public safety communications didn't work, and the consequences were devastating.

During the horrific terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, our communications networks were overloaded, resulting in calls being dropped or not going through.

More recently, although significantly improved from 2001, in my home state of North Carolina we felt the severe impacts from the

Hurricane Helene devastation – ultimately preventing people from calling 9-1-1 and receiving life-saving care.

These are just two examples of major events where a lack of public safety communications cost hundreds and thousands of lives.

Today's first responder communications landscape looks vastly different than that of 2001.

After 9/11, Congress stood up the 9/11 Commission, which released recommendations to prepare for and guard against future attacks.

One of those recommendations led to Congress establishing the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), a nationwide broadband network specifically built for public safety.

FirstNet was allocated 20 megahertz of spectrum and \$7 billion to build out the network in all 50 states and territories. In 2017, AT&T was selected to deploy this network, and since then, other providers offer competitive services to serve public safety.

With FirstNet's statutory authority set to expire in 2027, it's time for Congress to assess the progress made by FirstNet to ensure the law

requirements are being met and it is adequately serving the needs of our public safety community.

Additionally, our 911 call centers are working to deploy advanced technology, known as “Next Generation 911”. Next Generation 911 is a critical technology upgrade for our first responders and I have been a long-time supporter of its deployment nationwide.

This internet protocol-based system at our 911 call centers will open the door for advanced tools for both the public and our first responders to use.

NG911-equipped centers are able to receive text messages, photos and videos to help aid response efforts. This technology also allows for seamless integration of artificial intelligence for cybersecurity purposes or to aid call takers in times of large call volumes or provide real time language transcription or even translation.

Once fully deployed, NG911 will be able to provide specific geolocation data for wireless callers, known as a dispatchable location. This accurate location will let first responders know the exact location of a caller automatically, instead of just the nearest cell tower.

Similar technologies are also being implemented to transmit vertical location data, which can help first responders locate the exact floor of someone in a high-rise building.

Equipping our first responders with this information can improve response times and help save lives. Importantly, this technology allows calls to be transferred or re-routed to other call centers, in the event a call center is taken offline due to an outage or natural disaster.

Conclusion

Our public safety and law enforcement officers put their lives on the line every day to help us in our times of need, and we must make sure they have the best tools to do their jobs.

Today, we will hear from our witnesses about the state of public safety communications and whether public safety needs are being met. We will hear about what tools and technologies are most effective for them to do their job, and where improvements can be made.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today about these issues and how Congress can stand ready as a partner.

I now yield five minutes to my colleague, Ranking Member Matsui, for her opening statement.