

**Testimony of
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**Responses to Additional Questions for the Record for the
United States House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications & Technology**

Public Safety Communications in the United States

Submitted Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Additional Questions for the Record

The Honorable August Pfluger

1. **Mr. Newton, in the hearing we discussed difficulties in reaching rural communities and adding space-based mobile broadband through carriers to the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) system, can you expand upon your comments on the need to incorporate this technology into the WEA system and how it could bolster emergency preparedness in the lead up to a natural disaster?**

Leveraging space-based mobile broadband for WEA alerts promises to sustain the ability to alert populations in harm's way even when traditional communications infrastructure is inoperable or intermittently operable. Wildfires, flooding, high winds, landslides, ice, and even debris clearing activities may damage wireless and broadband infrastructure. When faced with disasters that result in widespread electrical, Internet, and infrastructure damage, local or regional cellular service may be out for days or weeks. By creating new pathways to reach consumer devices, space-based mobile broadband ensures our alerting capability despite extended recovery times on the ground.

2. **Amateur radio, also known as ham radio, proved to be a critical communication lifeline in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, especially in areas where conventional networks failed due to extensive power outages and infrastructure damage. Can you describe specific instances during Helene where amateur radio operators bridged communication gaps for emergency agencies, relayed messages for disaster victims, or supported coordination of rescue and relief operations?**

Amateur radio provided critical communications links immediately after Hurricane Helene, both through formal and informal . Two prominent examples of bridging communications gaps include amateur radio operators Dan Gitro (K2DMG) and Van Lee (KM4TC), who both spontaneously volunteered to relay critical emergency messages, event

details, and availability of supplies to impacted residents. They communicated through predominantly privately maintained amateur radio repeaters or directly with others over High Frequency (HF) radio from Johnston County, NC. Amateur radio operators also worked side-by-side with emergency managers and first responders in local and regional Emergency Operations Centers (EOC). Amateur radio operator volunteers also worked side-by-side with state and local emergency management offices to coordinate amateur radio personnel and resources in the affected areas.

- a. Barriers such as regulatory restrictions can impede amateur radio operators' ability to provide timely assistance during disasters. Would the passage of legislation like the Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act, or similar efforts to remove such barriers, help strengthen our region's emergency communications and disaster response capabilities?**

Passage of the Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act, and other legislation protecting rights of amateur radio operators, will strengthen emergency communications and disaster response capabilities across the nation. The amateur radio community remains a relevant and valued resource, especially during disasters. They are used as a force multiplier for local emergency managers, a source of real-time situational awareness, and a robust and redundant means for residents and public safety to remain connected. This capacity is dependent, however, on the availability of licensed volunteers, trained to perform specific tasks, operating radio equipment whose performance is significantly impacted by antenna placement. Legislation guaranteeing the right to install exterior radio antennas will improve operating conditions for existing amateur radio operators we depend on, and also encourages participation in the hobby for the next generation of "Hams."

The Honorable Russ Fulcher

- 1. Do you face any reception or data send/receive interruptions or delays due to the inability of wireless and broadband providers from deploying equipment on federal lands that may be adjacent to state, local, or private lands in more rural areas?**

I experienced reception and data send/receive interruptions and delays while training or responding on or adjacent to federal lands including Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in North Carolina, El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico, and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park on Hawai'i Island. It is not unusual to experience degraded wireless and broadband service in communities adjacent to federal lands as locations which are ideal with regards to radio frequency (RF) propagation are often the protected land. This results in less ideal locations and equipment being deployed which sacrifice coverage, capacity, or both.

- 2. Have you heard of problems due to the inability to locate towers, generating stations, or other equipment that are causing such interruptions or delays?**

I am not aware of specific incidents, but based on my experience it is not difficult to imagine the lack of cellular infrastructure, regardless of the reason, would cause interruptions and delays. Without effective wireless or broadband coverage, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are not reliable or timely, in-vehicle public safety systems such as mobile Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) cannot update, and responder accountability and tracking systems are likely ineffective without temporary deployables.