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January 23, 2026

Noah Jackson
Legislative Clerk
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Jackson,

Please see my answers to the submitted Questions for the Record for the hearing titled “Legislative Improvements to Public Safety Communications in the United States” on December 16, 2025.

The Honorable Robert E. Latta

Question:

As you know, I was the Republican lead on the Communications and Technology Subcommittee for the last six years and I appreciate how important our public safety agencies and wireless emergency alerts are to our local communities. I’m interested in how these two industries work together during disasters. Can you discuss how wireless and industry work cooperatively during emergencies, and what more can be done to ensure seamless communications?

Response:

CTIA and its member companies appreciate Congressman Latta’s clear and consistent leadership on public safety issues. With more than 447,000 active cell sites across the U.S. providing overlapping coverage and diverse resiliency solutions, it is typical for the vast majority of cell sites to remain online throughout a disaster event. The availability of wireless services during disaster events is also a reason that Wireless Emergency Alerts are one of the most powerful alert and warning tools available to local emergency managers and responders. This resiliency and redundancy is the result of sustained planning, collaboration, and investments designed to ensure

that wireless services are available when first responders, emergency managers and our communities need it most.

For example, wireless providers work closely with industry partners and participate in emergency response agency-led “blue skies” preparedness exercises and disaster simulations to ensure that all stakeholders’ response plans are practiced and ready before a disaster hits. And in the lead up to a disaster like a hurricane or wildfire, wireless providers’ dedicated emergency preparedness and response teams fortify critical cell sites with backup power, ensure portable cell sites and power generators are available to be deployed, and stock up on repair equipment and fuel to maintain cell sites during extended power outages.

Once a disaster event hits, wireless providers deploy portable cell sites, satellite backhaul, and innovative solutions such as Flying Cell on Wings to restore coverage in areas hardest hit. Wireless response teams are often among the first on the ground, using airboats, all-terrain vehicles, drones, and temporary access routes to assess damage and restore service in hard-to-reach communities.

Wireless providers put aside fierce competitiveness to work hand in hand and share resources with other wireless providers, fiber backhaul providers, electric power companies, and federal, state and local emergency response authorities. These efforts are aligned with the FCC’s Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative, which codified the voluntary Wireless Resiliency Cooperative Framework originally developed by CTIA and its member companies. That Framework was created in collaboration with Congress and the FCC to establish best practices for mutual aid, municipal preparedness, consumer readiness, and stakeholder communications during disaster response and recovery.

Wireless networks also rely on fiber transport and commercial electric power to maintain network operations, which means that coordination with fiber broadband providers and electric power companies is essential to maintain service continuity and accelerate restoration. The Cross-Sector Resiliency Forum—a collaboration between the communications and the electric power sectors—provides a venue to regularly share lessons learned from disasters, exchange contact information, identify joint training and exercise opportunities, and develop best practices to improve preparedness and response. The Forum also maintains coordination channels that enable communications providers and electric power companies to communicate before, during, and after disasters and has helped establish priority restoration arrangements for critical wireless facilities.

Under the leadership of FCC Chairman Brendan Carr, the FCC has reinforced these efforts by hosting a workshop focused on cross-sector resiliency and releasing [Public Safety Best Practices During Hurricane Season](#). Wireless providers incorporate these best practices into their preparedness and restoration planning. Further, the FCC routinely issues notices that state and local emergency responders can use to remind debris clearing crews to avoid unnecessary cuts of fiber lines that are critical to maintain connectivity between cell sites and wireless networks.

As each disaster event presents unique challenges, wireless providers will continue to invest in resiliency—strengthening cell sites and wireless networks, enhancing partnerships and

coordination across the communications and electric power sectors and emergency managers, and developing innovative tools and resources. By maintaining a flexible regulatory environment and facilitating coordination opportunities, Congress can help the wireless industry ensure that Americans can continue to rely on wireless services in responding to and recovering from disasters.

The Honorable Russ Fulcher

Question:

Mr. Gerst, my state of Idaho has particular challenges when it comes to large amounts of territory that are hard to reach. On top of that, we face permitting obstacles due to so much of it being under federal control. Local, state, and federal entities need to be able to share robust amounts of data to address a range of emergency situations: directing resources to a wildfire not yet contained, addressing the collapse of a road, or accessing a population cut off due to a snow storm. All the while normal 911 services need to be supported. Mr. Gerst, talk to me about legislative and policy improvements you see to ensure there is reliable interoperability of large data sets between local jurisdictions.

Response:

Congressman Fulcher, thank you for your leadership on permitting issues, including your recent legislation to streamline the permitting process for broadband infrastructure build-out. Your question highlights the geographic and operational challenges that rural and frontier states like Idaho face during emergency situations, as well as the importance of permitting reform that can enable wireless services to reach further into those areas.

CTIA and its member companies applaud this Committee's bipartisan work to advance legislation that streamlines broadband permitting processes and reduces needless delays, as well as the FCC's recent actions to modernize and streamline wireless infrastructure siting rules, including policies governing state and local government reviews as well as National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act reforms. Ensuring timely access to rights-of-way, expediting environmental and historic preservation reviews for communications infrastructure, and maintaining reasonable siting policies will allow wireless providers to extend resilient coverage into hard-to-reach areas and support emergency communications when disasters strike.

Wireless services are part of the backbone for America's emergency communications systems. Today, more than 80 percent of 911 calls originate on wireless devices, making mobile wireless services the primary on-ramp to 911 emergency services nationwide. The transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911) is the next step to enhance our nation's 911 system.

NG911 enables wireless providers to deliver voice, text, images or videos that can help local emergency communications centers (ECCs) better respond to emergencies. During a disaster event like a hurricane or wildfire, NG911 also enables ECCs in hard-hit areas to transfer calls and data to an ECC that can respond. While local ECCs and 911 authorities determine their NG911 capabilities and policies for sharing data with other ECCs, wireless providers are actively

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working with 911 authorities to support the deployment and adoption of NG911 services under a framework established by the FCC.

CTIA and its member companies support a uniform national framework for NG911 deployment. As this Committee considers legislation like the Next Generation 911 Act, we support strong federal coordination with 911 authorities and local ECCs that can help achieve our shared goals of ensuring the availability of NG911 nationwide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Matthew Gerst

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