



Member Alert

The Need to Improve Wireless 9-1-1 Location Accuracy

Since its founding in 1935, APCO International has successfully promoted adoption of 9-1-1 and other public safety-related regulations, legislation, and policies, on behalf of its professional members. APCO's approach is fact-based, deliberate, and serious, reflecting the missions of its over 21,000 members who operate and manage 9-1-1, emergency dispatch, and first responder communications networks every day across the country.

APCO supports the FCC's most recent efforts to continue to improve 9-1-1 location accuracy, particularly for indoor locations. However, many of the claims by FindMe911, which according to its website, is financially supported by a location vendor, are simply wrong and misleading. Contrary to a change.org petition and similar statements attributed to FindMe911, the FCC's proposed rules, if adopted, would not result in a "two-year plan to find all 9-1-1 callers on cell phones." The fact is that if the rules are adopted as proposed, and assuming the vendors funding FindMe911 can deliver on their promises, the result after the Commission's initial two year benchmark would be that 9-1-1 call centers, or Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), will be provided with horizontal coordinates only, within a range of 50 meters or 164 feet, for only two-thirds of wireless 911 calls. And even for those two-thirds of calls, the variance in accuracy can place a caller in another building altogether, and without even any indication of vertical height such as floor level, let alone an apartment number, classroom, hotel room, or office suite.

This is why APCO has publicly advocated that while it supports the FCC's proposed requirements to improve location accuracy for wireless 9-1-1 calls, the incremental improvements in the Commission's proposal, while helpful, will not provide sufficient accuracy in many cases to dispatch emergency personnel to a specific indoor location – a "dispatchable address" such as an apartment or room number. Accordingly, APCO also emphasized that the ultimate goal must be to provide a dispatchable address for all locations, indoor and outdoor. In this spirit, and consistent with APCO's history achieving the most effective outcomes in the interest of public safety, APCO has also embraced the agency's repeated calls to help develop a consensus approach with other public safety organizations and wireless service providers. APCO's goal in working on a consensus approach is to secure meaningful, universal, verifiable, and enforceable improvements, including that wireless service providers deliver a dispatchable address to PSAPs for all wireless 9-1-1 calls.

APCO will continue to actively participate in the FCC's rulemaking proceeding, as well as pursue a consensus approach, to achieve the best outcome possible.

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