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Mel Maier, CPE  
maierm@apcointl.org

**HEADQUARTERS**

**J. Rhett McMillian, Jr. Building**  
351 North Williamson Boulevard  
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-1112  
386-322-2500

**EXECUTIVE OFFICES**

**Gregory T. Riddle Building**

1426 Prince Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
571-312-4400

www.apcointl.org

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April 18, 2024

Marlene Dortch

Secretary

Federal Communications Commission

45 L Street, NE

Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Notice of *Ex Parte*, PS Docket No. 21-479**

Dear Ms. Dortch,

On April 17, the undersigned met virtually with representatives of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (listed below) to discuss the Commission's proceeding on NG9-1-1.<sup>1</sup> APCO reiterated support for the proposed rules on originating service providers (OSPs) and offered recommendations for a further notice of proposed rulemaking focused on the need to achieve interoperability.

The public safety community has a comprehensive vision for NG9-1-1. Emergency communications centers (ECCs) should be able to receive calls, texts, and multimedia from members of the public and other sources, process the requests for emergency assistance, and share incident-related information with first responders and other ECCs. Public safety requires interoperability across the entire emergency communications chain.

APCO remains supportive of the Commission's proposal to require OSPs to deliver IP-based 9-1-1 traffic in the format requested and to the point(s) designated by the 9-1-1 authority.<sup>2</sup> As APCO has suggested, this requirement should apply to whatever types of 9-1-1 traffic an ECC is ready to receive, potentially including photos, videos, telematics, and other forms of broadband-enabled communications.

The record is sparse with regard to interoperability requirements the Commission should impose to ensure the seamless exchange of IP-based traffic between OSPs and 9-1-1 service providers. It's possible that, at least at this stage in the transition to NG9-1-1, OSPs and 9-1-1 service providers can successfully navigate any impediments to

<sup>1</sup> Facilitating Implementation of Next Generation 911 Services (NG911), PS Docket No. 21-479, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, FCC 23-47 (June 9, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Comments of APCO International, PS Docket No. 21-479 (filed Aug. 9, 2023); Reply Comments of APCO International, PS Docket No. 21-479 (filed Sep. 8, 2023).

interoperability for the 9-1-1 traffic ECCs are ready to receive. Nonetheless, empowering ECCs and 9-1-1 authorities to specify the format and point(s) of delivery may provide ECCs with whatever leverage they need to ensure a successful handoff. The Commission could also encourage OSPs and 9-1-1 service providers to collaborate on uniform methods and processes for acting on and facilitating ECCs' and 9-1-1 authorities' requests for IP-based traffic. This could entail developing industry best practice guides, common questionnaires to evaluate requests, and other resources to assist with the transition to IP-based 9-1-1 traffic.

The proposed rules in this proceeding are focused on the delivery of 9-1-1 traffic, which comprises only the first part of the emergency communications chain. To take the next step toward achieving public safety's vision for NG9-1-1, the Commission should initiate a further notice of proposed rulemaking to address interoperability requirements for 9-1-1 service providers and other elements of the emergency communications chain.

As the Commission is aware, ECCs that have transitioned to ESInets have been struggling with interoperability challenges, in some cases even with ESInets provided by the same vendor. The Commission can help solve this problem by imposing reasonable requirements on IP-based 9-1-1 service providers.

ECCs need to be able to transfer 9-1-1 traffic and incident-related data to other ECCs as part of mutual aid, correcting misroutes, and for other purposes. While it will probably be ECCs with adjacent service areas that are most often needing to exchange information, ESInets should be interoperable whenever they are providing connectivity between ECCs.

The Commission should seek comment on a rule that would require 9-1-1 service providers to enable the ECCs they serve to exchange all forms of 9-1-1 traffic with ECCs in different states and/or served by different 9-1-1 service providers. Each 9-1-1 service provider could demonstrate compliance with this interoperability requirement by certifying that ECCs it serves are able to exchange 9-1-1 traffic with at least three ECCs located in different states and/or served by other 9-1-1 service providers. Such a certification should include an attestation that the 9-1-1 service provider has confirmed interoperability through real-world testing. As part of the proposed interoperability requirement for 9-1-1 service providers, the Commission could seek comment on the role of call-handling solutions, record management solutions, computer aided dispatch, and emerging over-the-top solution providers in interoperability.

APCO appreciates the opportunity to discuss what's needed to achieve NG9-1-1. We look forward to Commission action to support public safety's vision for modern, interoperable communications.

Respectfully submitted,

APCO INTERNATIONAL

By:

Jeffrey S. Cohen  
Chief Counsel  
(571) 312-4400  
[cohenj@apointl.org](mailto:cohenj@apointl.org)

Mark S. Reddish  
Senior Counsel  
(571) 312-4400 ext. 7011  
[reddishm@apcointl.org](mailto:reddishm@apcointl.org)

Alison P. Venable  
Government Relations Counsel  
(571) 312-4400 ext. 7004  
[venablea@apcointl.org](mailto:venablea@apcointl.org)

CC (via email):

Brenda Boykin  
Jill Coogan  
Thomas Eng  
Gerald English  
John Evanoff  
Christopher Fedeli  
David Furth  
Timothy Hoseth  
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