

FCC's April Open Meeting Focuses on Emergency Services and Wireless Microphones

April 20, 2021

The FCC [Open Meeting](#), scheduled for April 22, 2021 includes several items of interest. During the April meeting, the third meeting led by Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel, the FCC will consider seven agenda items plus an enforcement order. The items include two emergency service items -- a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("FNPRM") to examine expanding the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to support text messaging to 988 -- and a Third Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to promote public safety by ensuring that 911 call centers and consumers are notified of disruptions to 911 service in a timely manner. The FCC will also consider a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to permit licensed wireless microphone users to operate a new wireless microphone technology called Wireless Multi-Channel Audio System ("WMAS") technology on frequencies already available for Part 74 licensed wireless microphone operations in certain bands. Finally, the Commission will consider an enforcement item at its meeting, but, as is the custom with enforcement actions, the subject of the enforcement and the nature of the action is not disclosed prior to the vote on the item.

You will find more details about the most significant items on the April meeting agenda after the break.

Text-to-988 – The [Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) would expand the new 988 designation for suicide prevention services to include text messaging. Specifically, the FNPRM proposes to require covered text providers to support text messaging by routing text messages sent to 988 to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ("Lifeline"). The Lifeline will begin receiving voice calls placed to 988 no later than July 16, 2022. Noting the increasing popularity of texting over voice services, particularly by younger users, the FNPRM seeks comment on the technical considerations for covered text providers, equipment vendors, and software vendors to also enable suicide prevention services to be provided through text-to-988 service. The NPRM considers the possibility of requiring text providers to send automatic bounce-back messages to consumers where the text-to-988 service is not available.

Wireless Microphones – The [NPRM](#) would propose to permit licensed wireless microphone users to operate WMAS technology on frequencies already available for Part 74 licensed wireless microphone operations in the TV bands (VHF and UHF). Those frequencies are the 653-657 MHz segment of the 600 MHz duplex gap, and in the 941.5-944 MHz, 944-952 MHz, 952.850-956.250 MHz, 956.45-959.85 MHz, 1435-1525 MHz, 6875-6900 MHz and 7100- 7125 MHz bands. The NPRM also proposes to permit WMAS to use up to 6 megahertz channels when less spectrum is sufficient for applications, or less spectrum is available. The NPRM would require WMAS to operate with a minimum of three audio channels per megahertz of spectrum to ensure an efficient use of spectrum. It would also require

WMAS to comply with the emission mask and spurious emission limits for WMAS that were specified in the 2017 European Telecommunications Standards Institution (“ETSI”) standards. The NPRM proposes to update the existing Part 74 and Part 15 wireless microphone technical rules to reference the relevant portions of the 2017 ETSI wireless microphone standards as they currently reference the 2011 version. Lastly, the NPRM seeks comment on whether to authorize WMAS for unlicensed microphone operations under Part 15.

Improving 911 Reliability – The [Third Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) proposes to harmonize two currently separate outage reporting rules – the rules applicable to covered 911 service providers serving Public Safety Answering Points (“PSAPs”) and the rules requiring telecommunications service providers to report outages affecting 911 service to the public. The NPRM would require all originating service providers to notify potentially affected 911 facilities of an outage within 30 minutes of discovering the outage (the same time period that covered 911 providers have to notify PSAPs of an outage). Service providers would also be required to communicate such information no later than two hours after the initial notification. It would also establish consumer notification procedures for 911 unavailability. This NPRM would standardize the type of information conveyed to PSAPs, which would include information such as the name of the service provider(s) offering the notification and/or experiencing the outage, date and time when the incident began, communications service affected, and potential impact on PSAPs. The NPRM also focuses on service providers maintaining accurate PSAP contact information.