

Resolution Calling for National and State Collaboration to Ensure Reliable Wireline and Wireless Communications during Power Outages

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the Communications Act of 1934, it is the long standing policy of the United States to make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States a rapid, efficient, nationwide, and worldwide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges for the purpose of promoting safety of life and property; *and*

WHEREAS, Historically, the “Public Switched Telephone Network” (PSTN) has been comprised of publicly available, interconnected, conventional wireline circuit-switched networks operated by telephone corporations and used to provide voice telephone service throughout the United States and internationally; *and*

WHEREAS, The switching nodes of conventional wireline circuit-switched networks are supported by robust independent back-up power supply resources (e.g., central office or CO standby diesel generators and battery banks), and can function during prolonged, and widespread commercial power outages; *and*

WHEREAS, The transmission and switching technology deployed in the PSTN has continuously evolved over time, and can be expected to further evolve as transmission and switching technology and associated communication protocols continue to change; *and*

WHEREAS, Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs), cable telephone service providers (CATV), and Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLECs) are providing conventional telephone service and/or voice services over broadband access networks, including fiber optics, that rely on the commercial electric power grid; *and*

WHEREAS, For conventional telephone service and/or voice access services provided over broadband and fiber-based access networks, during a power outage additional back-up power at both the customer’s premises and at a telecommunications provider's network is necessary to ensure that customers continue to have functioning conventional telephone and/or voice access service, including the ability to call 911 and E911; *and*

WHEREAS, Wireless cell phone service relies on the commercial electric power grid, and an adequate back-up power supply is essential for wireless networks to continue to operate during a power outage; *and*

WHEREAS, The nation's two largest ILEC holding companies, AT&T and Verizon, have stated their intent to selectively migrate basic telephone service customers away from copper-based wireline distribution networks and over to either wireless or fiber-based access networks; *and*

WHEREAS, Verizon is migrating customers from wireline copper-based access distribution networks to fiber-based or wireless access network facilities in several States and has proposed to do so in other States; *and*

WHEREAS, There have been numerous instances in which telecommunications services, provided over wireline and wireless networks that rely on the electric power grid, have ceased to function during commercial power outages; *and*

WHEREAS, Residential end-users of wireline telecommunications services that are provided over retail broadband network access facilities depend on 2 to 8 hour reserve back-up battery packs at their premises. During commercial power outages lasting longer periods of time, especially in circumstances of inclement weather, the need for access to 911 and E911 substantially increases; *and*

WHEREAS, the FCC has an open proceeding examining the reliability of 911/E911 access networks as well as the reliability and the continuity of communications networks, including broadband technologies (*see generally, In re: Improving 9-1-1 Reliability; Reliability and Continuity of Communications Networks, Including Broadband Technologies*, PS Docket Nos. 13-75 and 11-60, (FCC Rel. Mar. 20, 2013), Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 13-33 (the FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking focuses on the reliability and back-up power requirements of network nodes and does not address the issue of back-up power battery packs at the end-user customer premises)); *and*

WHEREAS, Both State and federal regulators are responsible for ensuring the continued widespread availability of reliable, affordable and high quality telecommunications services; *now, therefore be it*

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, convened at its 2013 Summer Meetings in Denver, Colorado, urges State and federal regulators to engage in meaningful dialogue with industry decision makers to develop policies and procedures that ensure telecommunications are maintained during power outages regardless of the technology and the communications protocols used to provide the services.

Sponsored by the Committee on Telecommunications
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