

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	PS Docket No. 15-80
Modifications to Network Outage Reporting)	PS Docket No. 13-75
and 911 Reliability Certifications for)	PS Docket No. 11-60
Covered 911 Service Providers)	

**COMMENTS OF THE ALLIANCE FOR
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY SOLUTIONS**

The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS) hereby submits these comments in response to the *Public Notice* released April 27, 2020, in the above-referenced dockets. In the *Public Notice*, the Federal Communications Commission’s (Commission) Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (Bureau) seeks comment on the implementation of new data fields for covered 911 service providers that it proposes to add to its Network Outage Reporting System (NORS) and 911 Reliability Certification System to improve the Bureau’s ability to assess 911 reliability. In these comments, ATIS recommends alternative proposals that provide the Bureau with greater situational awareness, while reducing unnecessary burdens.

I. BACKGROUND

ATIS is a global standards development and technical planning organization that develops and promotes worldwide technical and operations standards for information, entertainment, and communications technologies. ATIS’ diverse membership includes key stakeholders from the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) industry – wireless, wireline, and VoIP service providers, equipment manufacturers, broadband providers, software

developers, consumer electronics companies, public safety agencies, and internet service providers. ATIS is also a founding partner and the North American Organizational Partner of the Third Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), the global collaborative effort that has developed the Long Term Evolution (LTE), LTE-Advanced and 5G wireless specifications. Nearly 600 industry subject matter experts work collaboratively in ATIS' open industry committees and incubator solutions programs.

ATIS' Network Reliability Steering Committee (NRSC) was formed in 1993 at the recommendation of the Commission's first Network Reliability and Interoperability Council. The NRSC strives to improve network reliability by providing timely consensus-based technical and operational expert guidance to all segments of the public communications industry. The NRSC addresses network reliability improvement opportunities in an open environment and advises the communications industry through the development of standards, technical requirements, reports, bulletins, best practices, and annual reports. The NRSC is comprised of industry experts with primary responsibility for examining, responding to, and mitigating service disruptions for communications companies. The NRSC also collaborates with public safety associations and works with the Commission to provide input on NORS and Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS). NRSC participants are the industry subject matter experts on communications network reliability and outage reporting.

II. COMMENTS

A. Proposed Modifications to NORS

911 Checkbox and PSAP List. In the *Public Notice*, the Bureau proposes to add fields to NORS submission forms for covered 911 service providers that are intended to help the Bureau determine whether 911 special facilities were affected by a reportable outage and whether the

relevant PSAPs were appropriately notified.¹ To accomplish this, the Bureau proposes to require greater specificity in NORS notifications, initial reports and final reports by including a checkbox indicating whether the filer is a covered 911 service provider. If so, the filer would be prompted to identify which 911 special facilities are affected by a reportable outage and whether and how the associated PSAPs were notified.²

ATIS NRSC supports the efforts to ensure that PSAPs are notified of relevant outages by covered 911 providers. ATIS NRSC's work to standardize and streamline the PSAP notification process has been aimed at facilitating such notifications by the industry.³ While NRSC members support the addition of a checkbox in NORS to indicate whether the filer is a covered 911 service provider, they do not believe that this checkbox should be required on notifications and initial reports. In some cases, more detailed information on specific PSAP notification and impacted facilities may not be feasible at the notification or initial report stage as carriers are not likely to have complete knowledge of which facilities are affected and PSAPs impacted when filing.⁴

ATIS NRSC also opposes the proposed requirement that filers identify which 911 special facilities are affected by a reportable outage and whether and how these PSAPs were notified. First, this new requirement is unnecessary as the Commission's rules already require filers to notify all affected PSAPs both orally and electronically – there is no reason that carriers should be required to specify how it contacted each affected PSAP in NORS. Moreover, because NORS

¹ *Public Notice*, p.3.

² *Public Notice*, p.3.

³ See the ATIS NRSC webpage at https://www.atis.org/01_committ_forums/nrsc/ for more information.

⁴ Including this checkbox on notifications would be particularly problematic given that limited information that may be available at this stage.

filers already attest that the report is correct and complete when submitting the final report, an additional attestation regarding PSAP notifications is unnecessary.

Second, the proposed requirement would be burdensome, particularly in large outages. It is unclear under the Bureau's proposal how all impacted special facilities could be reasonably identified in NORS for outages that potentially impact large numbers of PSAPs (such as a NG911 Statewide or multi-state outage or a Selective Router failure). Given that there are 8,661 PSAPs included in Commission's PSAP Registry,⁵ listing all affected PSAPs and how each was contacted could be extremely challenging and burdensome.⁶

Instead of the proposed listing of notified PSAP and attestation regarding compliance with the Commission's PSAP notification rules, ATIS NRSC urges the Commission to consider a less burdensome alternative – adding a new check box to NORS final reports for covered 911 providers to confirm that they have taken reasonable steps to contact PSAPs affected by the 911 special facilities' outage in accordance with existing Commission rules.⁷

Alternative Diversity Measures. The Bureau also proposes to require NORS filers that are covered 911 service providers to identify, in a new data field that will be added to NORS final

⁵ See <https://www.fcc.gov/general/9-1-1-master-psap-registry> (last viewed on July 9, 2020).

⁶ To reduce burdens and ensure consistency, the Bureau proposes to offer filers a list of 911 special facility names generated from the list of PSAPs from covered 911 service providers' submissions to the 911 Reliability Certification System. *Public Notice*, pp. 3-4. ATIS NRSC notes that, even with this proposal, filers would have to retrain their personnel or modify internal systems to use the Bureau-provided special facility names, which may differ from the names commonly used by those service providers.

⁷ ATIS NRSC has done significant work to streamline and facilitate PSAP notifications, including the development and publication of a *Technical Report on Service Providers: Outage Reporting Structure and Potential Types of 9-1-1 Outages* (ATIS-0100066) and *Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Updating Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Outage Contact Information* (ATIS-0100068 (2019-11)). The NRSC has also made recommendations regarding a PSAP database, which are intended to improve communications with 911 providers during times of outage.

report submission forms, whether alternative measures to circuit diversity were in place for affected 911 special facilities.⁸

While ATIS NRSC does not object to the inclusion of this new field in NORS, we have two concerns about the Bureau's proposal. First, ATIS NRSC believes that providers should not be required to complete this new field unless alternative diversity measures are relevant to the outage being reported. If an outage does not involve a critical 911 circuit, this new field is irrelevant, and providers should not be required to provide this information in its NORS report. For example, certain "covered 911 providers" furnish only administrative lines that serve PSAPs and are not involved in the provision of "critical 911 circuits." The Commission has established that, under its current rules, such providers are exempt from all but one of the reliability certification elements – only the backup power requirement applies. If the Bureau adopts its proposed circuit diversity field, it should make clear that a provider reporting only administrative lines should select the "not applicable" option. The Bureau also could consider creating a drop-down option for "administrative lines" only in the first portion of the NORS submission, which would effectively exempt providers of these lines from having to complete the circuit diversity field.

In addition to administrative lines, there may also be other 911 outages for which diversity is irrelevant. As an example, an outage resulting in a loss of 911 call processing capabilities in one or more E-911 tandems/selective routers, as referenced in 47 CFR §4.5(e)(2),

⁸ *Public Notice*, p. 4.

would not have a relevant Alternative Measure because Critical 911 Circuits, as defined by the FCC do not include the selective router.⁹

Second, ATIS NRSC is concerned with how this sensitive information may be used and with whom it would be shared. ATIS NRSC believes that information regarding circuit diversity is highly sensitive and should not be shared with state agencies. While the Commission has proposed to require states to treat NORS data as confidential in its open *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Second FNPRM)* on the sharing of NORS and DIRS data with states,¹⁰ ATIS NRSC believes that this highly sensitive information, if improperly disclosed, could jeopardize the security of the network. Additionally, ATIS NRSC believes that providers should not be required to complete this new field unless alternative diversity measures are relevant to the outage being reported. If an outage does not involve a critical 911 circuit, this new field is irrelevant and providers should not be required to provide this information in its NORS report.

ATIS NRSC is also concerned with how this information would be used should it be shared with state agencies. The Bureau has proposed in the *Second FNPRM* that states may use federal data only for “public safety purposes.”¹¹ However, it is clear from the commenters in that proceeding that states hope to use NORS data for purposes that extend well beyond public safety. The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) acknowledges as much in its reply comments, noting that the Commission and the states have “different needs and objectives” relative to federal outage data.¹² The Colorado Public Utilities Commission in its

⁹ 47 CFR §9 defines “critical 911 circuits” as “911 facilities that originate at a selective router or its functional equivalent and terminate in the central office that serves the PSAP(s) to which the selective router or its functional equivalent delivers 911 calls, including all equipment in the serving central office necessary for the delivery of 911 calls to the PSAP(s).”

¹⁰ *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, PS Docket No. 15-80 (rel. March 2, 2020).

¹¹ *Id.* ¶23.

¹² CAL OES Reply Comments, p. 6.

comments noted the data would help the state compare data with neighboring states, to allow it to establish a baseline that could help identify areas where particular problems need to be addressed.¹³ The Michigan Public Service Commission noted that its proposed use of federal outage data goes beyond public safety purposes to include informing policy makers.¹⁴ The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable urged the Commission not to “unduly” restrict states’ use of the data and to clarify that “public safety purposes” includes analyzing the data in ways those agencies believe will help to improve service.¹⁵

Therefore, ATIS NRSC urges the Bureau not to make any final determination on changes to the NORS reporting requirements until the Commission has issued a final order in the pending rulemaking proceeding that identifies the state and federal¹⁶ agencies that will be given access to NORS data, delineates the scope of that access, and establishes the safeguards against disclosure that must be in place prior to granting such access.

B. Proposed Modifications to 911 Certification Forms

In the *Public Notice*, the Bureau proposes to require covered 911 service providers to explain with greater specificity how the certification elements apply to their network.¹⁷ A new drop-down field is proposed for the 911 Reliability Certification System to require covered 911 service providers to indicate whether they provide: (1) 911, E911 or NG911 call routing through a selective router or its functional equivalent; (2) automatic location information or automatic number information database lookup capability or its functional equivalent; and (3) direct service

¹³ Colorado Public Utilities Commission Comments, p. 1.

¹⁴ Michigan Public Service Commission Comments, p. 3.

¹⁵ Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable Comments, p. 2.

¹⁶ PS Docket No. 15-80.

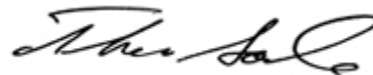
¹⁷ *Public Notice*, p. 5.

to a PSAP by one or more central offices it operates, including administrative lines to a PSAP, statewide default answering point, or appropriate local emergency authority.¹⁸ ATIS NRSC supports inclusion of this information in the 911 Reliability Certification Form but strongly recommends that the Bureau include it as a general/overall statement on the first page of certification under the “Overall Certification” tab of the 911 Reliability Certification System.

III. CONCLUSION

ATIS appreciates the opportunity to provide its input to the *Public Notice* and urges the Bureau to consider the input above.

Respectfully submitted,



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¹⁸ *Public Notice*, p. 5.