

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)
Inquiry Concerning 911 Access, Routing, and) PS Docket 17-239
Location in Enterprise Communications)
Systems)
)

REPLY COMMENTS OF THE VOICE ON THE NET COALITION

The Voice on the Net Coalition (“VON”)¹ respectfully submits these reply comments in response to the Commission’s Notice of Inquiry (“Notice”)² regarding the provision of 911 by enterprise communications systems (“ECS”). The Notice seeks comment on ways to ensure that that ECS supports direct 911 access, routing, and location, and keeps pace with technological developments and consumer expectations.³

Since 2003, VON and its members have been working closely with the Commission, state regulators and industry stakeholders to ensure the availability of 911 calling for enterprise customers using interconnected VoIP.⁴ Much progress has been made, and not only is 911 access standard with all systems, emergency calling solutions can be customized to fit the unique needs of enterprise customers. These solutions may include enterprise-wide alerting, screening of emergency calls by on-site security personnel⁵ or routing of those calls to on-site first responders,⁶ and the ability of mobile employees to easily access 911.

¹ The VON Coalition works to advance regulatory policies that enable Americans to take advantage of the promise and potential of IP-enabled communications. For more information, see www.von.org.

² *In the Matter of Inquiry Concerning 911 Access, Routing, and Location in Enterprise Communications Systems*, Notice of Inquiry, PS Docket 17-239 (rel. September 26, 2017).

³ *Notice* at 2.

⁴ See e.g., *First Report and Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, WC Docket Numbers 04-36 and 05-196 at 11 (rel. June 3, 2005) (“VoIP 911 Order”); VON Coalition ex parte, WC Docket No. 04-36 (filed May 12, 2005).

⁵ See Comments of Ad Hoc Telecommunications Users Committee at 5, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

⁶ Comments of Boulder Regional Emergency Telephone Service Authority at 5-6, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

The demands of a highly competitive market have driven innovative 911 solutions. Indeed, the rules adopted in the 2005 *VoIP 911 Order* have remained unchanged⁷ while IP communications technology continues to advance. Importantly, during this time, to VON’s knowledge, there have been few publicly reported complaints or incidents related to providers not complying with VoIP 911 rules.

Notwithstanding, there are challenges, particularly with respect to accessing and updating accurate location information. These challenges arise from the expansion of mobile solutions, the diversity of user endpoints and a variety of broadband solutions.⁸ More and more employees are working remotely, making voice calls from traditional handsets, laptops, notebooks and from apps on mobile phones. VoIP services may be managed on premise by the customer or provided in the cloud. Broadband access may be from CLECs, cable or phone companies, or increasingly from mobile or public (or home) WiFi networks.

To meet these challenges, the industry, including 911 service providers, is beginning to consider whether and how best to take advantage of commercial location services to provide more accurate location information. This commercial location information – in addition to GPS data, the National Emergency Address Database (“NEAD”) and a company’s location information server (“LIS”) -- is useful and provides relevant location information that could be used as part of an emergency calling solution. However, access to all of these sources of location information may vary based on the availability of GPS on the caller’s endpoint, the operating system of the endpoint and the type of Internet access. Another variable may be the capability of the PSAP to receive these varying types of location information in real time.⁹

⁷ The rules require, in part, that interconnected VoIP providers must provide 911 service; transmit the caller’s phone number and registered location to the appropriate public safety answering point (‘PSAP’); provide customers with options to update their registered location; and notify customers of any limitations of the 911 service. See 47 C.F.R. §§ 9.1-9.5.

⁸ Comments of Texas 9-1-1 Entities at 8, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

⁹ VON expects additional technology changes as PSAPs and service providers adopt changes required to deploy Next Generation 911. See *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*, PS Docket No. 10-255 (rel. September 22, 2011); Reply Comments of the Voice on the Net Coalition, PS Docket No. 10-255 (filed Feb. 9, 2012).

As a result, one-size-fits-all solutions are impractical and unrealistic.¹⁰ The Commission should not adopt calls for regulatory parity¹¹ or for mandates requiring the adoption of specific technologies or solutions.¹² For example, there is not yet any standard mechanism for automatic location updates when a user is moving around an enterprise's premises.¹³ The Commission should instead monitor developments in the market, encourage emergency calling location solutions that embrace the evolving location capabilities of the internet and IP-delivered services, and permit ECS customers to configure services in their own preferred way.¹⁴

The Commission should not modify the VoIP 911 rules, as implied by the Ad Hoc Telecommunications User Committee. For example, Ad Hoc recommends that the Commission impose on IP-enabled service providers the obligation to dynamically update location information of nomadic end users shortly after entry of new location information.¹⁵ This proposed requirement is impractical because in most circumstances interconnected VoIP providers must rely on the customer – specifically the IT Administrator of the company using the ECS – to create, maintain and timely update its own LIS if they want to ensure accurate real-time dynamic location of users on their premises, e.g., across the company's campus or manufacturing facilities. While the customer's LIS is only one possible source of real-time location information, it is a critical piece of the puzzle. Even in a future state where real-time location information is readily accessed from varying sources (e.g., GPS, commercial location information or the NEAD), a customer's LIS will continue to play an important role because in scenarios that are not addressed by any other source of location information. For example, neither GPS nor current commercial location options can necessarily specify granular locations within a large manufacturing plant or across a sprawling campus environment. Therefore, this location information may be only within the control of the customer, not the interconnected VoIP service provider.

¹⁰ See Comments of Telecommunications Industry Association at 2, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017); Comments of Ad Hoc Telecommunications Users Committee at 4-5, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

¹¹ See Comments of NENA at 2, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

¹² See Comments of West Safety Services, Inc. at 33-34, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

¹³ See Comments of AT&T at 4, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017); Comments of Cisco Systems, Inc. at 18-19, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

¹⁴ See Comments of Verizon at 3-4, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017); Comments of RingCentral, Inc. at 3, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017); Comments of AT&T at 3, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

¹⁵ See Comments of Ad Hoc Telecommunications Users Committee at 14, PS Docket 17-239 (filed Nov. 15, 2017).

Ad Hoc also criticizes what it calls typical agreements between VoIP providers and enterprise customers, which, according to Ad Hoc, require the customer to notify its employees of limitations with VoIP 911 service, distribute warning labels and ensure that its employees update location information, while affording VoIP providers the same limitations on liability as other communications providers.¹⁶ These commercial arrangements should not be disturbed. Enterprise customers are in a far better position to communicate with their (thousands or even tens of thousands) employees and it would be impractical for a VoIP provider to have that obligation.¹⁷ Nor should VoIP providers be subject to greater liability for 911 failures than wireline or wireless providers.

¹⁶ Id. at 12-13. VON also sees no benefit to creating different rules for VoIP as a consumer product and as an enterprise product. Id. at i-ii. That would simply create confusion as lines blur between business and residential uses and applications for communications services.

¹⁷ VON would not object to the elimination of the sticker requirement as 911 service limitations are readily available in the service provider's terms and conditions and in training materials provided to customers.

CONCLUSION

VON members look forward to working with enterprise customers and industry stakeholders to advance emergency calling solutions using IP communications, as technological developments allow. The Commission should continue to monitor developments, encouraging and facilitating the nationwide transition to Next Generation 911. At this time, no new rules or changes to existing rules are warranted.

Respectfully submitted,

VOICE ON THE NET COALITION

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