



ORANGE COUNTY MAYOR
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March 10, 2017

Mr. Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

Thank you for your swift announcement and immediate decision to pursue an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the 9-1-1 outages that recently impacted AT&T wireless customers across the country.

In addition to examining the actual malfunction of their system, I'd like to ask for a comprehensive review of AT&T's failure to alert its customers and impacted public safety agencies in a timely fashion.

Orange County, Florida is home to 1.2 million residents, 13 municipalities - including the City of Orlando, and is known as the theme park capital of the nation, hosting more than 66 million visitors last year, alone. Orange County Fire Rescue receives an average of 300 calls per day for paramedic and/or fire services. There are eight additional fire rescue responding agencies that serve certain incorporated portions of the county, significantly adding to the overall emergency calls for service.

As mayor of Orange County, I am responsible for all aspects of public safety, including the provision of emergency services to our citizens, residents and visitors in a timely and professional manner. On March 8, 2017, our public safety protocols were severely compromised when AT&T wireless customers in the Central Florida area were unable to reach emergency dispatch operators by calling 9-1-1. The inability for wireless customers to contact 9-1-1 impeded not only their access to paramedic and fire services, but also access to local sheriff and police departments.

As you know, the problems with AT&T's wireless services persisted for at least a three-hour time period, during which several bona fide emergencies occurred; we

actually think the outage was for a significantly longer time period, and will keep you apprised of what we determine to be the actual duration. However, what you may not know is that we did not learn of this malfunction from AT&T. Instead, we learned about the problem after a home-alarm operator phoned our dispatch center to report a medical emergency at a residence where they provide security system services. The homeowner was experiencing a medical emergency and had called 9-1-1 approximately a dozen times, each time the phone rang repeatedly without being answered. In the absence of an AT&T error message ("we cannot complete your call at this time), busy signal or other non-service indicator, the caller was left with the impression that 9-1-1 operators simply weren't answering the phone. Fortunately, the homeowner had a monitored alarm service, and the presence of mind to set off the alarm, prompting the monitoring service to call them. The homeowner asked the monitoring service to call 9-1-1 and report the medical emergency. Our paramedics arrived and after attending to the medical needs, an astute Orange County firefighter took the extra step to address the patient's assertion that they could not get through to 9-1-1. He called 9-1-1 using the patient's AT&T based mobile phone, then he called using several county-issued AT&T based mobile phones; in each case the phone call appeared to go through but was never answered. The firefighter then used a coworker's personal non-AT&T based mobile phone and the call was connected immediately.

The firefighter reported the situation to our emergency management communications center supervisor who immediately contacted the AT&T 9-1-1 help desk to report the problem. During the call, we learned that AT&T was aware of the problem, and in fact, had been aware of the situation for approximately two hours. The problem, as described by the AT&T help desk, was affecting customers in Orange County.

Just moments after learning about the malfunction from my public safety director, my son alerted me that he had just come upon a car accident with injuries. He called 9-1-1 and it rang over 40 times with no answer. Fortunately, another passerby stopped and was able to get through to our Fire Rescue Department. It became obvious that the magnitude of the situation might be far more widespread than AT&T first indicated to our communications center supervisor.

As a point of interest for your investigation, it was hours later when we received a group "no reply" email from AT&T, containing no working contact information or outage details. The email suggested that we contact AT&T during "normal business hours" if we had questions about the 9-1-1 outage.

I would also like for your investigation to capture the integrated and comprehensive local response that was necessary to counteract AT&T's lack of action and communication.

- To avoid a potential catastrophic outcome for our residents and visitors, I directed our Public Safety and Communications staff to get a message out to the community by every means available to let the public know that a call to 9-1-1 from an AT&T wireless phone or device may not get through, and to use our non-emergency number in that event.
- Orange County staff reached out to AT&T again to obtain a statement that they could include in our media alert. However, AT&T did not respond to that request. Therefore, I directed our staff to move forward immediately, on our own.
- Our Communications Division and Public Safety Department issued an emergency media alert, and also pushed the notice out using social media and OCFL Alert, our local emergency notification App.
- At the same time, I and my communications manager personally called our local news outlets urging them to run a live screen scroll during their ongoing programming. They immediately grasped the urgency of the situation and were eager to help.
- We deployed our "reverse 9-1-1" phone system to notify residents of the outage.
- Additionally, Orange County's Fire Rescue Chief contacted his counterparts across the state to notify them of this dangerous situation.

While the county made its best attempt to notify AT&T wireless customers of the compromise to the 9-1-1 system, we could not do what I believe AT&T should have done – notify their wireless customers directly and immediately of the malfunction. If AT&T is able to send a *courtesy* text message to customers when their data plan is reaching its limit, they could have, should have, and - in the future - should be *obligated* to notify customers and public safety partners immediately when access to 9-1-1 has been compromised.

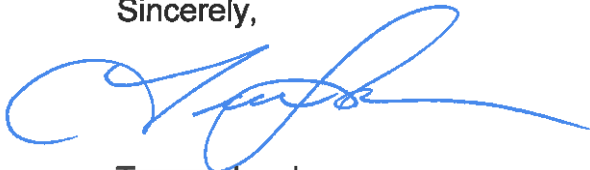
Aside from everyday emergencies, we live in a world where planned hate crimes and terror attacks are executed in very strategic and methodical ways. In Orlando, we still mourn the lives lost on June 12, 2016, where a gun man murdered 49 innocent people and severely injured 68 others. During that horrific event, a single hostage was able to place one of the most crucial 9-1-1 calls. During that call, the hostage provided information about the gunman's location that helped the SWAT team to

bring the bloodshed to an end. If that one cellular phone had been unable to successfully connect with a 9-1-1 operator, the trauma and loss of life would almost certainly have been even greater.

In light of the critical role wireless providers play as the lifeline between citizens and public safety personnel, and the implications to homeland security of not having protocols in place in the event of another breakdown of this nature, I would ask that you also investigate whether communication protocols were followed. Further, if no such mandatory protocols exist, I urge you to establish strict policies and procedures for all wireless carriers to ensure rapid communication to their customers, the public safety community, and the general public of outages or malfunctions that could compromise their customer's safety.

I look forward to participating in the FCC investigation, and to presenting a detailed case study of how this incident unfolded in Orange County. As you move forward, please let me know how we may contribute. I believe that relaying critical life-saving messages in a timely fashion when events like this occur is not only the moral obligation of all communication providers, but should also be a legally enforceable obligation. Orange County stands ready to assist in transforming the mandated emergency support responsibilities of wireless carriers, thus strengthening civil defense and national security, as well as the crucial safety net of care that we provide to our local citizens and visitors.

Sincerely,



Teresa Jacobs

c: Board of County Commissioners
Ajit Lalchandani, County Administrator
Dr. George Ralls, Deputy County Administrator
Otto Drozd III, Chief, Fire Rescue Services