



PUBLIC NOTICE

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COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDERS MUST COMPLY WITH 911 AND 988 OUTAGE NOTIFICATION OBLIGATIONS

PS Docket Nos. 15-80, 13-75, 23-5; ET Docket No. 04-35; WC Docket No. 18-336

The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) of the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) issues this Public Notice to remind cable, satellite, wireless, wireline, interconnected VoIP, covered 911 service providers, and covered 988 service providers of their obligations under the Commission's rules to provide timely and actionable notification of outages that potentially affect 911 and 988 service.

Public safety organizations have made us aware of many examples of providers sending vague, inaccurate, or unnecessary notifications. This Public Notice highlights key requirements of the Commission's outage notification rules, including:

- Cable communications, satellite communications, wireless, wireline, interconnected VoIP, covered 911, and covered 988 service providers must notify 911 and 988 special facilities about outages that potentially affect those special facilities.¹
- Providers must notify 911 and 988 special facilities about such an outage as soon as possible, but no later than 30 minutes after the discovery of the outage.² To fulfill this obligation, providers must take reasonable steps to discover outages.³
- When they discover an outage that potentially affects a 911 or 988 special facility, providers must send notifications to the applicable special facilities that convey all available material information about an outage.⁴
- Providers must send follow-up notifications as soon as possible after additional material information becomes available, with the first follow-up due no later than two hours after

¹ See 47 CFR §§ 4.3(a), (d), (f), (g), (h), (j); 9.19(a)(4) (defining provider types); *id.* §§ 4.5(e)-(f) (defining when an outage potentially affects 911 and 988 special facilities); *id.* §§ 4.9(a)(4), (c)(2)(iv), (e)(1)(v), (f)(4), (g)(1)(i) (requiring notification of 911 and 988 special facilities of outages that potentially affect them).

² *Id.* § 4.9(h), (i) (describing how 911 and 988 special facility outage notifications must be made).

³ See *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications; New Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80, ET Docket No. 04-35, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Second Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration, 30 FCC Rcd 3206, 3229, para. 69 (2015) (*2015 Second Report and Order*).

⁴ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(2); *id.* § 4.9(i)(2).

initial contact with the applicable special facility.⁵ Providers must notify the applicable special facility when service has been restored.⁶

- Providers must identify and maintain current contact information appropriate for 911 and 988 outage notifications at each 911 and 988 special facility that serves areas that the provider serves.⁷ Providers may use services offered by third-party vendors that assist in satisfying their notification obligations.

Failure to comply with the special facility notification requirements may result in enforcement action.⁸ Overall, we urge providers to provide *better* notifications, rather than *more* notifications that confuse or mislead public safety officials about outages.

I. PROVIDERS THAT MUST SEND 911 AND 988 OUTAGE NOTIFICATIONS

Under the Commission's rules, cable communications, satellite communications, wireless, wireline, interconnected VoIP, and covered 911 service providers, as defined in section 4.3 and 9.19(a)(4) of the Commission's rules, as applicable, must notify 911 special facilities, including Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), that may be affected by an outage that potentially affects 911 service.⁹

This requirement applies to all outages that potentially affect a 911 special facility that providers "experience[] on any facilities that they own, operate, lease, or otherwise utilize."¹⁰ Consequently, the notification requirement applies not only to facilities-based providers but also to resellers to the extent that they "lease or otherwise utilize" facilities to provide communications services to their customers.¹¹ Providers must send notifications about outages to their services that arise not only in their call origination networks but also in other locations, such as the "middle mile" or wholesale transport network facilities they own, operate, lease, or otherwise utilize.¹² Providers that are required to submit 911 outage notifications must send notifications about outages of their services that potentially affect a 911 special facility even if the outage is caused by or otherwise relates to the operations of a third-party service provider that manages, routes, or otherwise contributes to 911 call processing.¹³

Under the Commission's rules, cable communications, satellite communications, wireless, wireline, interconnected VoIP, and covered 988 service providers must also notify a 988 special facility—i.e., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Department of

⁵ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(5); *id.* § 4.9(i)(5).

⁶ *See Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications; Improving 911 Reliability; New Part 4 of Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80 & 13-75, ET Docket No. 04-35, Second Report and Order, 37 FCC Rcd 13847, 13860 para. 24 (2022) (*2022 Second Report and Order*).

⁷ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(1), (i)(1).

⁸ *See* 47 U.S.C. § 503; 47 CFR §§ 4.9(a)(4), (c)(2)(iv), (e)(1)(v), (f)(4), (g)(1)(i), (h), (i).

⁹ *See* 47 CFR § 4.9(h); *see also id.* § 4.3(a), (d), (f), (g), (h), 9.19(a)(4). Although the Commission recently amended the definition of covered 911 service providers, providers newly designated as such are not subject to the 911 outage notification requirement. *See Facilitating Implementation of Next Generation 911 Services (NG911); Improving 911 Reliability*, PS Docket Nos. 21-479 and 13-75, Report and Order, FCC 26-39, at para. 156 (June 26, 2026) ("We decline at this time to extend the section 4.9(h) reporting obligation to those entities that are newly designated as CSPs by this Order.").

¹⁰ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(4).

¹¹ *See 2015 Second Report and Order*, 30 FCC Rcd at 3226-27, paras. 62-63.

¹² *2022 Second Report and Order*, 37 FCC Rcd at 13848 para. 2 n.5.

¹³ *Id.* at 13854-55, para. 13.

Veterans Affairs (VA), and the 988 Lifeline administrator¹⁴—of outages that potentially affect that special facility.¹⁵ Covered 988 service providers are entities that provide the 988 Lifeline with capabilities such as the ability to receive, process, or forward calls.¹⁶ As with 911 outages, providers must send notifications about outages to their services that potentially affect 988 special facilities and that arise in “middle mile” or wholesale transport network facilities.¹⁷

II. TIMING OF NOTIFICATION

Providers must notify each affected 911 or 988 special facility as soon as possible, but no later than 30 minutes after discovering an outage that potentially affects 911 or 988 service.¹⁸ Discovery of an outage triggers the 30-minute deadline for providers subject to the notification rules, regardless of whether the outage is first discovered by an originating service provider or a third party that the provider utilizes to manage, route, or otherwise contribute to 911 and 988 call processing and transmission, such as a transport provider.¹⁹ A third party’s discovery of the outage is attributed to the provider for the purpose of sending timely outage notifications.²⁰

While the 30-minute deadline to notify a potentially affected 911 or 988 special facility does not begin to run until the provider discovers that a reportable outage exists, providers have an obligation to take reasonable steps to discover outages.²¹ We expect that providers will design their systems to ensure prompt internal notification about events that could lead to an outage. Providers also cannot delay notification while attempting to determine all material information about an outage,²² or while identifying every 911 or 988 special facility that may be affected.²³

III. CONTENT OF NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications must include all available material information about the outage.²⁴ “Material information” includes the following ten data elements:

1. An identifier unique to each outage;
2. The name, telephone number, and email address at which the notifying service provider can be reached for follow-up;
3. The name of the service provider(s) experiencing the outage;

¹⁴ *Ensuring the Reliability and Resiliency of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline; Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission’s Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications; Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018*, PS Docket No. 23-5 & 15-80, WC Docket No. 18-336, Report and Order, 38 FCC Rcd 6917, 6932-33, para. 25 (2023) (*2023 Report and Order*).

¹⁵ See 47 CFR § 4.9(i).

¹⁶ See 47 CFR § 4.3(j) (excluding from this definition crisis centers that participate in the 988 Lifeline and other entities that offer the capability to originate 988 calls where another service provider delivers those calls to the appropriate crisis center).

¹⁷ *2023 Report and Order*, 38 FCC Rcd at 6921, para. 9, n.29.

¹⁸ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(4), (i)(4).

¹⁹ *2022 Second Report and Order*, 37 FCC Rcd at 13859, para. 20.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *2015 Second Report and Order*, 30 FCC Rcd at 3243-44, para. 69.

²² *2022 Second Report and Order*, 37 FCC Rcd at 13859, para. 21.

²³ *Id.* at 13858, para 19.

²⁴ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(2), (i)(2).

4. The date and time when the incident began (including a notation of the relevant time zone);
5. The type of communications service(s) affected;
6. The geographic area affected by the outage;
7. A statement of the notifying service provider's expectations for how the outage potentially affects the 911/988 special facility (e.g., dropped calls or missing metadata);
8. The expected date and time of restoration, including a notation of the relevant time zone;
9. The best-known cause of the outage; and
10. A statement of whether the message is the notifying service provider's initial notification to the 911/988 special facility, an update to an initial notification, or a message intended to be the notifying service provider's final assessment of the outage.²⁵

Each of these ten elements, as well as any other material information about an outage, must be included in a 911 or 988 special facility outage notification “where available.”²⁶ We emphasize that the phrase “where available” does not relieve providers of their obligation to undertake reasonable efforts to investigate outages and assess their impact before transmitting a notification.²⁷ Providers should use the period between discovery of a reportable outage and the initial notification deadline to gather material information concerning the outage and its effects on affected 911 and 988 special facilities. Notifications that merely announce the existence or possibility of an outage or offer vague statements about the provider's investigatory efforts typically violate the Commission's rules. Such notifications provide limited operational value to affected 911 and 988 special facilities and may hinder their ability to quickly identify outages requiring immediate operational attention.²⁸

We expect that providers engaged in reasonable efforts will typically obtain most or all of the above information within 30 minutes of discovering the outage and, accordingly, this information should typically be included in the initial 911 and 988 special facility outage notifications.²⁹ The unique identifier; the name, telephone, and email address of the notifying provider; the name of the provider experiencing the outage; and a statement of whether the message is the initial, follow-up, or final notification should necessarily be available to the reporting provider at the time of notification and therefore must be included in every notification. We expect that the date and time the incident began; the type of communications service(s) affected; the geographic area affected by the outage; and a statement of how the service provider expects the outage to affect 911 or 988 (including, for instance, whether there is a complete loss of the ability to call 911 or 988, a partial loss, or an irregular, intermittent effect)³⁰ will become known to the provider soon after discovering the outage and determining that it meets the

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *2015 Second Report and Order*, 30 FCC Rcd at 3243-44, para. 69 (“... [P]roviders have an obligation to take reasonable steps to discover outages . . .”).

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications; Improving 911 Reliability; New Part 4 of Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80, PS Docket No. 13-75, ET Docket No. 04-35, Order on Reconsideration, 39 FCC Rcd 7362, 7366-67, paras. 10-12 (2024) (*911 Reliability Reconsideration Order*); *2023 Report and Order*, 38 FCC Rcd at 6939, para. 36.

³⁰ ATIS, NRSC Task Force, Service Providers: Outage Reporting Structure and Potential Types of 911 Outages at 2-3 (2018), https://access.atis.org/apps/group_public/download.php/44352/ATIS-0100066.zip (*ATIS NRSC Task Force Outage Reporting Report and Template*).

thresholds for notification. Providers' notifications should include all material information they have obtained but omit information that could not be discovered through reasonable efforts within the 30-minute deadline.

In the case of 911, we expect that a provider that has determined that an outage is occurring will generally know, based on the services affected by the outage, how 911 is affected, including whether there is a complete, partial, or intermittent loss of the ability to call 911 or 988 and whether the delivery of call-back or location information is affected.³¹ With respect to geographic impact, PSHSB has reviewed notifications that were sent to large swaths of PSAPs hundreds of miles away from the likely geographic impact of an outage or that broadly indicate that "all or parts of the United States" are affected or could be affected. Such notifications contravene the purpose of the rules, as they are virtually useless for 911 or 988 special facilities seeking to quickly identify whether an outage affects it and the impact on the public's ability to receive assistance from their facility. Providers should only send notifications to those special facilities that they have reason to believe are affected by an outage and send additional notifications as they learn about additional special facilities that are affected by the outage, provided that these impacts could not be discovered through reasonable efforts within the 30-minute deadline.

The final two data elements expressly listed in section 4.9—the expected date and time of restoration, including the time zone; and the best-known cause of the outage—are more likely to evolve as a provider investigates the outage.³² Providers often will know some material information relevant to those issues when submitting their initial notification to 911 and 988 special facilities and should include that information for the facility's situational awareness.³³ This information can be updated or refined in follow-up notifications. For instance, while it may be more challenging to estimate a restoration time for larger or more complex outages,³⁴ even conveying the fact that an outage is complex and may take longer to resolve would be useful for a 911 or 988 special facility seeking to determine what action to take to remediate the outage's effects on the public. Similarly, a provider may only be able to report the best-known cause of an outage at the initial notification stage in relatively simple terms. For example, a provider may only know at the outset that an outage was likely caused by a software problem or is located in their transport network.³⁵ Such descriptions should be included in the initial notification and refined as appropriate in follow-up notifications.

To illustrate, we provide three examples of notifications that are non-compliant with the rules.

1. A notification that states a service provider "is experiencing a network impairment that MAY potentially impact . . . your PSAP" and "locations may include [list of 17 states]" is not

³¹ See *id.*; see also, e.g., *Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems; Amendment of Parts 2 and 25 to Implement the Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite (GMPCS) Memorandum of Understanding and Arrangements; Petition of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to Amend Part 25 of the Commission's Rules to Establish Emissions Limits for Mobile and Portable Earth Stations Operating in the 1610-1660.5 MHz Band*, CC Docket No. 94-102, IB Docket No. 99-67, Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 18 FCC Rcd 25340, 25352, para. 30 (2003) (stating that when a 911 call is transmitted to a PSAP over administrative phone lines, ALI and ANI are lost); *911 Call-Forwarding Requirements for Non-Service-Initialized Phones*, PS Docket No. 08-51, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 30 FCC Rcd 3449, 3451, para. 3 (2015) (stating that 911 calls placed without call validation procedures such as non-service-initialized calls may not have usable ANI or call back features).

³² *ATIS NRSC Task Force Outage Reporting Report and Template* at 3.

³³ Cf. *2023 Report and Order*, 38 FCC Rcd at 6921-22, paras. 8-9 (describing the importance of situational awareness about outages affecting public safety).

³⁴ *ATIS NRSC Task Force Outage Reporting Report and Template* at 3.

³⁵ *Id.*

- compliant if a provider is both reasonably certain that all 911 special facilities in an area of a state are affected and is unsure about impacts beyond that area. Such notification, if sent to each 911 special facility in all seventeen states, does not comply with the Commission's rules because it is not sufficiently clear as to which geographic area is affected by the outage and which geographic areas *may* be affected by the outage.³⁶ Instead, the service provider should clearly state which special facilities the provider is reasonably certain are affected, and may promptly send follow-up notifications if this material information changes.
2. A notification that states the provider "is experiencing a network outage that may potentially affect your 911 special facility" and does not specify *how* a 911 special facility is affected by the outage is not a compliant notification when the provider knows the outage is intermittently causing calls to drop and, when the calls do not drop, are not completed with ALI/ANI.³⁷ Such information must be included in the notification to comply with the Commission's rules.
 3. A notification that states "at this time...[the] outage cause [is] Other" does not comply with the rule because it does not include material information that is available to the provider about the cause of the outage. Even if the only thing a provider knows at the time of sending the notification is that the cause resulted from, *e.g.*, a failed software update; an equipment failure in a third party's transport network; or an engineering error in the network core, then that information is the "best-known cause of the outage" and must be included to comply with the Commission's rules.³⁸

We also encourage providers to be attentive to the format, phrasing, and organization of their outage notifications. Many special facilities have informed PSHSB that it is difficult to quickly identify and assess relevant information, because providers' notifications often are confusingly organized, employ a variety of different formats, or include technical jargon rather than plain-language explanations about the cause and public-safety effects of outages. Providers may consider referencing the structure and format of the outage notification template developed by the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS) in collaboration with public safety organizations, including APCO International, the National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA), and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), to promote greater consistency and usability in outage notifications affecting 911 services.³⁹ Providers could consider using a similar format.⁴⁰

³⁶ See 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(2)(vi); *id.* § 4.9(i)(2)(vi) ("The geographic area affected . . .").

³⁷ See 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(2)(vii); *id.* § 4.9(i)(2)(vii) ("A statement of the notifying . . . provider's expectations for *how* the outage potential affects the special facility") (emphasis added).

³⁸ See 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(2)(ix); *id.* § 4.9(i)(2)(ix).

³⁹ See *ATIS NRSC Task Force Outage Reporting Report and Template*; see also Letter from Mel Maier, APCO International, Harriet Rennie-Brown, National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA), and Brian F. Fontes, NENA: the 9-1-1 Association, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, PS Docket No. 15-80 et al., at 2 (filed Jan. 7, 2025).

⁴⁰ ATIS also makes available a template for 988 outage notifications. See ATIS, NRSC Task Force, Outage Reporting Structure and Potential Types of 988 Outages, at 2-3 (2025), <https://access.atis.org/higherlogic/ws/public/download/83280/ATIS-0100073.zip/latest>.

IV. FOLLOW-UP NOTIFICATIONS

Providers must keep 911 and 988 special facilities informed about ongoing outages by supplementing initial notifications.⁴¹ These updates should include any additional material information that becomes available, or any changes to material information already provided, and must be sent as soon as possible after that information becomes available.⁴² For 911 outages that are resolved within two hours of the provider's initial contact with the 911 special facility, cable, satellite, wireless, wireline and interconnected VoIP providers must, at a minimum, also notify the 911 special facility that the outage is resolved.⁴³ For outages not resolved within that timeframe, cable, satellite, wireless, wireline and interconnected VoIP providers must supply an update no later than two hours after the initial notification, interim updates as soon as possible after additional material information becomes available, and a final notification that the outage has been resolved.⁴⁴ Providers must submit follow-up notifications on the same basis for outages that affect 988 special facilities.⁴⁵ The Bureau advises providers that a failure to notify these facilities promptly about additional material information, and to notify them when an outage has concluded, may also subject providers to enforcement referral.⁴⁶

V. RELIANCE ON THIRD PARTIES

Providers listed in section 4.9(h) and (i) of the rules remain ultimately responsible for compliance with the Commission's 911 and 988 special facility notification requirements.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, providers may satisfy their obligations by having their third-party vendors conduct network monitoring, perform outage analysis, and send notifications to special facilities on the provider's behalf (particularly when an outage's cause is located within the third-party vendor's own network). Third-party services may also be available, either free of charge or for a fee, to help maintain the currentness of 911 and 988 special facility contact information as required by the Commission's rules.⁴⁸ In relying on third parties, providers must be mindful of *their* obligations to discover outages, assess their impact, and notify affected special facilities.⁴⁹ Accordingly, providers should ensure that any contractual arrangements they have with third parties will require those entities to support providers' timely and accurate identification of outage information so that the provider can fulfill its obligations to notify potentially affected 911 and 988 special facilities and the Commission.⁵⁰

⁴¹ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(5), (i)(5).

⁴² 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(5); *see also* 2022 Second Report and Order, 37 FCC Rcd at 13860, para. 24.

⁴³ *See* 2022 Second Report and Order, 37 FCC Rcd at 13860, para. 24.

⁴⁴ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(5); *see also* 2022 Second Report and Order, 37 FCC Rcd at 13860, para. 24.

⁴⁵ 47 CFR § 4.9(i)(5).

⁴⁶ *See* 2022 Second Report and Order, 37 FCC Rcd at 13860, para. 24.

⁴⁷ *See Long Distance Direct, Inc.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 15 FCC Rcd 3297, 3300, para. 9 (2000) (stating that carriers are responsible for the acts and omissions of third parties acting on their behalf); *see also* 47 U.S.C § 217.

⁴⁸ 47 CFR § 4.9(h)(1), (i)(1).

⁴⁹ 2022 Second Report and Order, 37 FCC Rcd at 13859, para 20; 2023 Report and Order, 38 FCC Rcd at 6932, para. 24.

⁵⁰ *Id.*; *cf. New Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, ET Docket No. 04-35, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 19 FCC Rcd 16830, 16875-76, para. 81 (2004) (disclaiming that reliance on third parties introduces delay when filing final NORS outage reports).

VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This Public Notice highlights certain obligations under the Commission's rules and policies. It does not replace or supersede those rules. Providers are responsible for reviewing and complying with all applicable requirements in the Communications Act and the Commission's rules, including part 4 of the Commission's rules and any applicable requirements relating to the provision of 911 and 988 services.

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