

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Doris Matsui

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Hearing on “Public Safety
Communications in the United States”

September 9, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Hudson.

Today’s hearing is about one of the most critical resources keeping Americans safe.

Public safety communications are vital to ensure we have around-the-clock warnings to avoid tragedies, such as the lives lost and the tens of thousands displaced during this year’s California wildfire season.

Or this summer’s flash floods in Central Texas, the deadliest in nearly 49 years.

These are not just one-off events.

As climate change worsens, extreme weather events are becoming more common and deadly.

Hurricane season has grown longer and more intense, and wildfire season is now year-round in the Western U.S.

Yet instead of investing in the public communications systems that literally save lives...

Republicans are bending the knee as President Trump takes a wrecking ball to our public safety infrastructure.

In July, congressional Republicans gave in to President Trump’s demands to cancel over a billion dollars in funding to local public television and radio stations.

Public media stations which reach nearly 99 PERCENT of Americans and can send out emergency alerts even when cellular and internet service are down.

In 2018, Sacramento’s K-V-I-E delivered the first-ever earthquake early warning in under three seconds.

This warning system by California public TV stations gives the public critical seconds of notice—before shaking begins—allowing people to move to safety, hospitals to protect patients, and operators to secure critical infrastructure.

Yet Republicans chose to defund public media, kneecapping local communities’ ability to receive lifesaving information, especially in rural and remote areas.

This isn't just speculation – we're already seeing the results of these decisions play out in real time.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting can no longer administer grants for the Next Generation Warning System. That means millions of dollars in funding to upgrade local stations' emergency alert equipment is left in limbo.

And thanks to their One Big Ugly Bill, Republicans have hijacked billions of spectrum auction dollars to fund tax breaks for the wealthy...

Abandoning past bipartisan plans to use those funds to invest in Next Generation 9-1-1 nationwide, to update decades-old systems and provide faster, more accurate emergency responses.

All while the Trump Administration is gutting public safety agencies like the National Weather Service.

DOGE fired close to 600 N-W-S staff who were critical in delivering timely, accurate forecasting and effective disaster coordination.

In May, the N-W-S offices in Sacramento and Hanford had to close 24/7 operations because the Trump Administration decimated over half their workforce.

N-W-S isn't waste or fraud. It's an essential service to ensure Americans have forecasts and alerts to not only plan their day, but to prepare for—and survive—natural disasters.

Yet, the Trump Administration continues to dismantle what keeps Americans safe.

Take the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the lead agency for coordinating federal disaster response.

Instead of bolstering FEMA before hurricane season, President Trump slashed its workforce and boasted about eliminating FEMA as soon as December.

Across the board, where the government is providing a service that makes people safer, President Trump has decided it's not worth the cost.

Is that really the legacy my Republican colleagues want to leave behind? The best they have to offer their constituents?

We should be investing more resources in our public safety infrastructure, not taking a chainsaw to them.

We must restore public media funding, invest in Next Generation 9-1-1 nationwide, and fight back against President Trump's public safety cuts.

We must also pass common sense solutions like my Emergency Reporting Act, to improve network resiliency and ensure first responders aren't left in the dark during life-threatening events.

September 9, 2025

Page 3

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can strengthen public safety communications.

I hope we can get back to working on this issue in a common sense, bipartisan way, instead of standing by as this Administration slashes and burns our public safety and disaster preparedness.

And with that, I yield the balance of my time...