



COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
  
COMMITTEE ON  
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0509

January 29, 2020

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

Last month when you testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, you agreed to my request that the Federal Communications Commission hold a field hearing in Northern California by June 5, 2020 regarding the cell tower outages that Californians witnessed during the recent wildfires.<sup>1</sup> I am writing to follow up on your commitment, and to request that you provide me with the following information as soon as possible:

1. The date and time on which the Commission will hold this field hearing;
2. The location of the field hearing; and
3. What steps the Commission is currently taking to ensure that relevant stakeholders will be invited to testify at the field hearing.

It is critical that the Commission hear from individuals who were directly affected by the cell tower outages. It is also critical that the Commission hear why cell towers went down during the power shutoffs, including what backup power was in place and what coordination existed between the wireless carriers and the utilities leading up to and during the shutoffs.

Across Northern California, there were hundreds of cell towers that went down when the power was turned off during the wildfires.<sup>2</sup> In Contra Costa County, which is part of my district, 88 towers went down when the power was turned off during the wildfires—that is nearly 10 percent of all cell towers in the county.<sup>3</sup> The outages meant that people could not call 911, let loved ones

<sup>1</sup> Hearing on "Accountability and Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission," House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, December 5, 2019, <https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/hearing-on-accountability-and-oversight-of-the-federal-communications-0>,

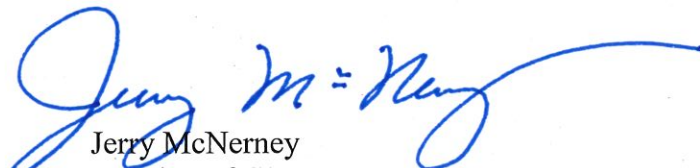
<sup>2</sup> Communications Status Report for Areas Impacted by California Public Safety Power Shutoffs, October 28, 2019, Federal Communications Commission, <https://www.fcc.gov/document/ca-power-shutoff-communications-status-report-oct-28-2019>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

know that they are safe, or receive wireless emergency alerts. The Commission must take all possible steps to ensure that this does not happen again.

Thank you for your attention in this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Svetlana Matt in my office at [Svetlana.Matt@mail.house.gov](mailto:Svetlana.Matt@mail.house.gov) or (202) 225-1947.

Sincerely,



Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Michael O’Rielly, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission  
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission  
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission  
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission