



**SUFFOLK COUNTY FIRE, RESCUE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION**

Box 127 - YAPHANK, N.Y. 11980  
(631) 852-4851

January 28, 2004

Michael K. Powell, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Docket 02-55

Dear Chairman Powell:

At a leadership summit meeting in Washington with more than 150 of my colleagues from around the country, we united on one of the most pressing issues the fire service faces today, that of public safety interference at 800Mhz. In these times of heightened security and alert, our first responders need the support of the FCC in resolving this critical issue. Highly reliable communications for public safety professionals save lives—that cannot be disputed.

Interference in the 800Mhz band can come between the firefighter on the front line of defense and the chain of decision makers assisting in an emergency situation. In fact, it is estimated that public safety agencies will experience interference at more than 350 locations this year—the highest single-year total to date. The trend is alarming and foreshadows the day when communications are interrupted during a future catastrophic event.

Regrettably, many wireless carriers do not recognize 800Mhz interference as a serious problem. Some that do acknowledge the problem favor a “patch and fix” solution whereby interference is dealt with after the problem occurs. Though this approach may work well in other settings, it is wholly unacceptable when it comes to public safety. That is why I support the proposed realignment of the spectrum known as the Consensus Plan—the only solution supported by all the major public safety organizations. We wouldn’t think of equipping our firefighters with gear that has the potential to fail, and we cannot endanger the lives of firefighters and the public with a plan that does not proactively address this problem. We cannot afford a reactive plan that places our members and the public at risk.

In a nutshell, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Although the FCC may not have foreseen the issue of interference when originally dividing the 800 Mhz band, the Consensus

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Plan offers a reasonable solution to this problem. The Consensus Plan, by way of spectrum reallocation at no cost to taxpayers, is the solution that would prevent radio interference before problems occur. In addition, the Plan assures that public safety entities are provided the bandwidth necessary for growth in the future, while allowing the private sector dedicated areas for their own future development.

Because we are in charge of the protection of citizens in Suffolk County, we take this issue quite seriously. Though there are vested interests on all sides of this issue, in our opinion, this is, above all else, a matter of protecting the public. This is our job and we believe the Consensus Plan offers the best solution.

We urge you and the FCC to adopt the Consensus Plan and to expedite implementation as quickly as possible. If you believe it would be of use, we are happy to discuss this matter with you at a time of mutual convenience.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norman Reilly, Jr." followed by a circled set of initials "NR".

Norman Reilly, Jr., Chairman  
Suffolk County Fire Rescue and Emergency Services Commission  
P O Box 127  
Yaphank, NY 11980-0127

NR/cq

cc Senator Clinton, Schumer  
Congressman Bishop, Israel, King  
FCC Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy  
FCC Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein  
FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
FCC Commissioner Kevin J. Martin  
FCC Secretary Marlene H. Dortch