Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

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# Overview

In February the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) extended the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC) for a fourth two-year term. Nominations for membership are being sought for those individuals that can contribute to the Council’s responsibilities of providing the Commission with expertise and recommendations on the development of standardized best practices for the nation’s communication systems.

Specifically related to emergency communications, the FCC submitted a Report to Congress entitled: *Legal and Regulatory Framework for Next Generation 911 Services*. The report provides recommendations to Congress on the legal and regulatory infrastructure needed to accelerate the transition from legacy 911 to Next Generation 911 (NG911). In addition, the FCC released an *Order* [PS Docket No. 07-287] to officially change the name of the system that transmits emergency alerts to the public from “Commercial Mobile Alert System” (CMAS) to “Wireless Emergency Alerts” (WEA). The purpose of the name change is to reflect the more common usage of WEA by the commercial mobile service providers and provide consistency across organizations.

New legislation was introduced by U.S Representative George Miller (CA) in an education bill to Congress: *The Transforming Education through Technology Act* [H.R. 521]*.* The bill proposes that Congress fund $500 million in grants to be distributed to states and districts that support the application of technology to improve the college-and-career readiness, achievement and engagement of all students, including those with disabilities.

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# Legislative Activities

## An Education Bill that Supports Accessible Learning Technology

February 6, 2013 — U.S. Representative George Miller (CA), the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, introduced a new education bill to Congress: *The Transforming Education through Technology Act* [H.R. 521]*.* The bill proposes that Congress fund educational grants to be distributed to states and districts totaling $500 million. The funds would support the utilization of technology to improve the college-and-career readiness, achievement and engagement of all students, including those with disabilities. Specific to individuals with disabilities, the bill would require that when a State educational agency applies for an educational grant, they describe the tools and mechanisms that will be utilized to “improve instruction consistent with the principles of universal design for learning.” If the funds are obtained by the State agency, local educational agencies would be required to use learning technology consistent with the principles of universal design, as well as assistive technology, to ensure that all students have “equitable access to high-quality curriculum, instruction, assessments, technology and digital learning.” In addition, State agencies that receive funds must ensure that teachers, paraprofessionals, library and media personnel, specialized instructional support personnel and administrators are trained and capable of utilizing such technology that supports the accommodations available to students with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[Text of Bill [H.R. 521]](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/t2GPO/http:/www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr521ih/pdf/BILLS-113hr521ih.pdf)

[[http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/t2GPO/http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr521ih/pdf/BILLS-113hr521ih.pdf](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/t2GPO/http:/www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr521ih/pdf/BILLS-113hr521ih.pdf)]

# Regulatory Activities

## Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council Looking for Members

February 12, 2013 — The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is to extend the Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC) for a fourth two-year term and is seeking nominations for membership to be submitted by March 20, 2013. The CSRIC is seeking representatives from government agencies, communications service providers, mobile technology developers, and organizations representing people with disabilities. The CSRIC is a federal advisory committee that “provides guidance, expertise, and recommendations to the Commission to improve the security, reliability and interoperability of the nation’s communications systems.” The responsibilities of the CSRIC include, but are not limited to the development of FCC best practices with regards to the improvement and promotion of secure networks and mobile devices, reliable communications services, enhanced 911 and next-generation 911 services (NG 9-1-1), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and the transmission of timely emergency alerts and warnings. The process by which to nominate or express interest of membership can be reviewed in the [FCC Public Notice](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-173A1.pdf).

#### Additional Information

[FCC Public Notice](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-173A1.pdf)

[<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-173A1.pdf>]

## CMAS Becomes “Wireless Emergency Alerts”

February 25, 2013 — The Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released an *Order* [PS Docket No. 07-287] that officially changes the name of the system used to transmit emergency alerts to the public from “Commercial Mobile Alert System” (CMAS) to “Wireless Emergency Alerts” (WEA). Under the Warning Alert and Response Network Act (WARN Act), the FCC adopted the essential technical requirements to enable commercial mobile service providers to transmit emergency alerts. This system was originally referred to as CMAS in the rulemaking proceedings released by the FCC. However, WEA is the more common terminology utilized by the commercial mobile service providers. To eliminate confusion and provide consistency across organizations, the FCC revised the name to reflect what is commonly used by the participating mobile service providers.

#### Additional Information

[Press Release](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-280A1.pdf)

[<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-280A1.pdf>]

## FCC Recommendations on Deployment of NG911 Services

February 27, 2013 — The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) submitted a Report to Congress pursuant to Section 6509 of the Next Generation 9-1-1 Advancement Act of 2012 (NG911 Act) entitled: *Legal and Regulatory Framework for Next Generation 911 Services*. The report, developed by FCC staff in the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, provides recommendations to build the necessary legal and regulatory infrastructure to support states, public safety answering points (PSAPs) and service providers, as they transition from legacy 911 to NG911. Primary recommendations to Congress include:

* Incentivize states to become “early adopters” of NG911 through challenge grants and other competitive funding programs.
* Promote standards, such as ensuring “NG911 [is] fully accessible to people with disabilities,” through continued regulation and outreach efforts.
* Promote the development of location technologies that can support all NG911 applications on all networks and devices.
* Evaluate and eliminate state legacy regulations that impede the deployment of NG911 and ensure the inclusion of regulations that provides accessibility to NG911 services.
* Support an advisory board that evaluates technologies that facilitate communication between public safety services and individuals with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Report to Congress](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-319165A2.pdf) [<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-319165A2.pdf>]

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## FCC’s Progress in the Accessibility of Advanced Communications

February 2013 — The Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Annual Performance Report was released in early February and summarizes the FCC’s work on accomplishing strategic goals and meeting performance commitments established in the FCC FY 2012 Annual Performance Plan. Some of the areas in which the FCC focused on included: promotion and adoption of spectrum for broadband; launching the Connect America Fund and reforming the Lifeline program; promotion of competition in the interest of the public; empowerment and protection of consumers; and agency process and regulatory reform. With specific regards to disabilities, the FCC continued to implement the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) and enforce their hearing aid compatibility rules to ensure equal access to advanced telecommunications for individuals with disabilities. In addition, the FCC adopted rules requiring that all broadcast video posted on the Internet include closed captioning.

#### Additional Information

[FCC FY 2012 Annual Report](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-318772A1.pdf) [[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\_public/attachmatch/DOC-318772A1.pdf]](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-318772A1.pdf)

# Wireless RERC News

## CSUN 2013, Experiences of Note

Wireless RERC researchers appeared on the CSUN conference program five times. The [*Emergency Info and People with Disabilities*](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2013/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/173) presentation was a an exclusive preview of a forthcoming report commissioned by the National Council on Disability to examine effective communication for people with disabilities before, during, and after emergencies. If you missed it you’ll have to wait for the report, but to sate your interest search #CSUN2013 for Tweets from the presentation. *App Factory: Assistive and Accessibility Apps* was a demonstration and discussion of assistive and accessibility apps developed by the Wireless RERC’s App Factory project during its first year of operation. We hope you had a chance to attend CSUN, but if not, you can get a taste by viewing the slides of the following presentations:

[Social Media, Public Emergencies & Disability](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/content/publications/csun-2013-social-media-public-emergencies-disability)

Longitudinal survey research data will be presented on the use of social media and other media and devices during public emergencies by people with disabilities.

[Wireless Technology Use and Disability](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2013/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/90)

The results from a multi-year national survey on wireless technology use by people with physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities.

[Survey Says! National EAS Test Accessibility](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/content/publications/csun-2013-survey-says-national-eas-test-accessibility)

Presentation of a study of the nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on the effectiveness of EAS for people with sensory disabilities.

Another presentation of note was *Latest Trends in IP Law & Information Access*, where American foundation for the Blind’s, Mark Reichert discussed how the intellectual property (IP) laws impact the creation and distribution of alternative formats of copyrighted material to make them accessible to people with vision loss and print disabled. We also enjoyed a demonstration of future technology being developed by Code Factory as part of the Cloud4All initiative. Ferran Gállego described it as auto configuration of mobile accessibility using near field communications (NFC) and cloud stored user profiles; impressive, to say the least.

#### Additional Information

[Wireless RERC CSUN 2013 Presentations](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/content/publications/presentations) [<http://www.wirelessrerc.org/content/publications/presentations>]

[CSUN 2013 Website](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2013/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1)

[<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2013/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1>]

## Wireless RERC Joins the National Academies Workshop on Geotargeted Alerts & Warnings

The Computer Science and Telecommunications Board of the National Academies hosted a workshop to examine current knowledge and research on geotargeted disaster alerts and warnings on February 21-22, 2013 in Washington, D.C. The workshop was organized by the Committee on Geotargeted Disaster Alerts and Warnings, which is charged with examining current knowledge and research to improve the effectiveness of alerts and warnings with greater geographical precision. Helena Mitchell, Wireless RERC Principal Investigator and a member of the committee, moderated the workshop panel, *Lessons from and Opportunities for Traditional Technologies for Geotargeted Alerts*. Her opening remarks include the possibility of sending geotargeted alerts that contain targeted content to people whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) via geo-fencing of Schools for the Deaf (e.g. Gallaudet) and sending ASL video formats of the alert message.

#### Additional Information

[Geotargeted Alerts and Warnings](http://sites.nationalacademies.org/CSTB/CSTB_081131) [<http://sites.nationalacademies.org/CSTB/CSTB_081131>]

## AccessNote Now Available on App store

AccessNote is an iOS app that enables users who are blind or visually impaired to take notes, create documents, and access applications. In addition to being a low-cost alternative to traditional notetakers costing $2000 or more, AccessNote allows users to combine efficient notetaking with many other features and functions of the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. [Download AccessNote from the App Store](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/accessnote/id591287188?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4).

#### Additional Information

[The App Factory AccessNote Page](http://wirelessrerc.org/node/203) [[http://wirelessrerc.org/node/203]](http://wirelessrerc.org/node/203)

## Guidelines to Help You Prepare for Emergencies

John Morris and Michael Jones of the Wireless RERC published a guide and checklist entitled *Emergency Preparedness for People With Disabilities* in the February issue of “Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.” The article provides guidelines for individuals with disabilities to follow when developing emergency plans in preparation for emergency situations and includes a checklist of items to include in emergency kits, such as a Ready Kit and a Go Bag. In addition, as stress is a common response in emergency situations, a list of the signs of stress an individual might feel in an emergency are provided to help individuals recognize and mitigate the symptoms.  

#### Additional Information

[PDF](http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/0003-9993/PIIS0003999311008331.pdf) [<http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/0003-9993/PIIS0003999311008331.pdf>]

## Introducing Students to Universal Design and Wireless Technology

On February 15, 2013 James Mueller, a Wireless RERC scientist, presented “Getting Wireless: An Introduction to Universal Design and Wireless Technology” to 32 sophomore industrial design students at Virginia Tech.  This is part of the Wireless RERC’s initiative to educate the next generation of wireless technology designers on universal design as a core practice for innovative and future design of products and applications.

The specific objectives of the project are to:

1. Increase universal design awareness.
2. Promote the application of universal design principles in the design of wireless technologies.
3. Encourage development of assistive technologies employing wireless technologies.
4. Provide advanced-level design training and support for future designers, who are highly qualified to promote and practice universal design of wireless technologies.

#### Additional Information

[Building Research Capacity in Wireless Accessibility and Usability](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/content/building-research-capacity-t3)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.org/content/building-research-capacity-t3>]

## Wireless RERC Inclusion in the FCC Report on NG911 Services

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Report to Congress in entitled *Legal and Regulatory Framework for Next Generation 911 Services,* in which the Wireless RERC was cited and referenced throughout the document. In preparation of the report, the FCC issued a *Public Notice* that sought public comments on the issues related to the legal and regulatory infrastructure needed for the transition from legacy 911 to Next Generation 911 (NG911). The Wireless RERC is referenced in regard to its support of NG911 deployment being governed at the state and local level and for favoring new 911 funding mechanisms, as the current system is thought to be outdated and inefficient for supporting the transition to NG911. In regard to how 911 funds should be collected, the Wireless RERC comment was included that noted the importance of a fee-based approach ensuring that “non-voice-enabled services contribute their fair share to 911 funding.” The Report also included Wireless RERC recommendations on specifically increasing the role and authority of the Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC), expanding the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant program to include technologies that advance NG911, and enhancing the Master Public Safety Advisory Point (PSAP) Registry to provide an interactive map showing each PSAP’s NG911 capability.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Report to Congress](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-319165A2.pdf)

[<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-319165A2.pdf>]

## Wireless RERC Comments on Text-to-911 Deployment

The Wireless RERC submitted reply comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission's *Further Notice of Purposed Rulemaking: Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications* [PS Docket No. 11-153] and *Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment* [PS Docket No. 10-255]. The Wireless RERC agreed with assertions that the regulations on the availability of text-to-911 and bounce back error messages should apply to all mobile service providers. For the latter, the Wireless RERC supported the National Emergency Number Association's (NENA) recommendations for standardized language and further suggested that the bounce back message phrasing be vetted by people whose primary language is American Sign Language. Finally, the Wireless RERC maintained that, while education and outreach efforts should be a collaborative effort, the federal government, specifically the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, should play a primary role by developing a nationwide PSA on text-to-911 and ensuring the accessibility of outreach activities and materials.

#### Additional Information

[Wireless RERC Comments](http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022119399)

[<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022119399>]

## Mobile Apps for People with Disabilities at ATIA Conference

John Morris, a Wireless RERC research scientist attended the Assistive Technology Industry Association’s 2013 Conference where he participated in the panel “Mobile Apps for People with Disabilities” at the Research Symposium on IDevices, Apps & the Cloud. The conference provided a forum for professional practitioners serving those with disabilities to communicate and participate in educational sessions. There were over 2,000 attendees for the more than 200 educational sessions at the conference, held in Orlando, Florida from January 30 to February 2, 2013.

#### Additional Information

[ATIA](http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/0003-9993/PIIS0003999311008331.pdf) 2013 Conference Information

[<http://atia.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4299>]

# Other Items of Interest

## WebAIM Launches 2 Screen Reader User Surveys

February 12, 2013 — Web Accessibility in Mind (WebAIM) has launched two new surveys that focus on the use of screen readers: a *Survey of Users with Low Vision* and a *Survey of Users with Motor Disabilities*. The data collected from the surveys will be made available to the public and used to provide guidance and recommendations on the design and development of accessible web content. All individuals with low vision or motor disabilities are invited to take the surveys, which will remain open through March 15, 2013. WebAIM is an initiative of the Center for Persons with Disabilities (CPD) and Utah State University that concentrates on the expansion of the web’s potential for individuals with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[Survey Announcement](http://webaim.org/blog/lowvis_and_motor_surveys/)

[<http://webaim.org/blog/lowvis_and_motor_surveys/>]

[Survey of Users with Low Vision](http://webaim.org/projects/lowvisionsurvey/)

[<http://webaim.org/projects/lowvisionsurvey/>]

[Survey of Users with Motor Disabilities](http://webaim.org/projects/motordisabilitysurvey/)

[[http://webaim.org/projects/motordisabilitysurvey/]](http://webaim.org/projects/motordisabilitysurvey/)

## A Toolkit to Improve the Accessibility of Social Media in Government

February 28, 2013 — The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy launched the new Federal Social Media Accessibility Working Group whose initiative is to evaluate and provide solutions for overcoming the challenges of accessibility of social media platforms and the content posted on same. The first resource developed and released by the working group is an evolving toolkit that provides guidance and baseline standards for agencies and companies to ensure their social content is accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities. An initial list of accessibility and usability tips has been developed but this is an evolving document. Therefore, the Social Media Accessibility Working Group encourages agencies, organizations and citizens to provide feedback and comments in order to “collectively advance towards better accessibility to public services and programs for citizens.”

#### Additional Information

[Post on Toolkit Launch](http://blog.howto.gov/2013/02/28/socialgov-accessibility-initiative-launches-with-toolkit-for-all/)

[<http://blog.howto.gov/2013/02/28/socialgov-accessibility-initiative-launches-with-toolkit-for-all/>]

[Evolving Accessibility Tips Document](http://www.howto.gov/social-media/using-social-media-in-government/improving-accessibility)

[<http://www.howto.gov/social-media/using-social-media-in-government/improving-accessibility>]

# Upcoming Events

## Disability Policy Seminar

The 2013 Disability Policy Seminar will be held in Washington, D.C. on April 15-17. This is an opportunity for individuals to meet with and hear from disability policy experts, including administration officials, key Hill staff and other advocates to discuss the “hottest topics in disability public policy.” This includes topics such as Medicaid, Social Security, the current budget situation and how these relate to and directly impact programs that help individuals with disabilities. The third day of the conference culminates with a breakfast on Capitol Hill and meetings with your elected representatives and staff.

#### Additional Information

[2013 Disability Policy Seminar Information](http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173)

[<http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173>]

## 2013 NARRTC CONFERENCE: HIGHLIGHTING NIDRR-FUNDED RESEARCH

The National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers' (NARRTC) annual meeting and conference will be held April 18th and 19th, 2013 in Alexandria, VA. The conference provides an opportunity to highlight the progress and latest results from research and development projects funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). Registration for the 2013 conference will open November 1, 2012 and the call for papers will open November 15, 2012.

#### Additional Information

[NARRTC Website](http://narrtc.org/)

[[http://narrtc.org/]](http://narrtc.org/%5d)

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights**

February 2013

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights reports on national and local public policy events and recent wireless technological advances and political activities; and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities. *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* is published monthly by the Wireless RERC. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our web site at [<http://www.wirelessrerc.org>].

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