



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
**DEMOCRATS**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 17, 2017

**CONTACT**  
Matt Schumacher — (202) 225-5735

## **Pallone Highlights Need for Improvements to Nation's Emergency Alert System**

**Washington, D.C.** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on the “Future of Emergency Alerting:”*

Thank you, Chairman Blackburn and Ranking Member Doyle, for having this hearing today. And thanks to the witnesses for agreeing to testify on this important topic.

Before, I turn to the matter before us, I want to quickly address FCC's efforts to strip away consumer's net neutrality protections at tomorrow's FCC meeting. FCC Chairman Pai has proposed a plan that would kill net neutrality. The Chairman's proposal will have a chilling influence on our democracy, cut away at our connections with each other and limit economic opportunities for the future. It's no wonder that more than 1 million comments have already been submitted. I would urge the Commission to listen to the American people and reconsider this misguided approach.

Getting back to this hearing, President Truman created our nation's first emergency alerting system in 1951, in part to ensure Americans would be prepared in the event of a nuclear strike.

It's hard to overstate the importance of emergency alerts. Whether it's preparing us for the impending landfall of a devastating hurricane; telling us to seek shelter from a tornado; or letting us know there is an active shooter nearby—getting up-to-the-minute information saves lives.

The need for alerts unfortunately is now greater, as we face the sobering realities of climate change, and as mass shootings appear more frequent than ever.

The people in my district know this too well. The emergency alerts that were sent out ahead of Superstorm Sandy was one important way officials helped people along the New Jersey shore evacuate and prepare. Going above and beyond just passing along alerts, one radio station called the Rat stayed on-air during the storm to help reunite families and get people to safety.

Alerts also helped to get the word out last year when a bomb was detonated in Seaside Park, New Jersey, and several more bombs were found at a train station in Elizabeth. Authorities in New York and New Jersey used mobile alerts to enlist the public's help to find the suspect.

Now, with the advent of new technologies, Americans deserve better, more detailed information to help keep them safe, wherever they are, when disaster strikes.

But new technologies won't save lives if they aren't useful and available to everyone. We need to ensure existing systems are free from interference, and we must test and evaluate these systems to make sure they can get the job done.

Unfortunately, that's not something we've always been good at. As I mentioned, the first nationwide alerting system was created in 1951, but we didn't test the nationwide system until 2011—60 years later. The results of that test were abysmal. And entire states didn't even receive the test alerts.

Today, we're here to learn about the status and future of public safety and what is being done in the name of saving more American lives. When it comes to public safety, we always must ask ourselves how many lives we're saving, not how many products companies are selling.

###