

## In Case You Were Wondering . . .

**O**n a blustery day in early February, four of the five FCC commissioners and a fair number of senior staffers made their way from Washington to New York, to hold the first in a series of hearings on communications lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy—both the failures (of which there were plenty) and the success stories (of which there were also quite a few). The hearing was split into two parts, a morning gathering in New York City and an afternoon session across the Hudson River in Hoboken, New Jersey. Since I live just a short train ride away from Hoboken, I listened to the live stream of the morning session on my computer and then headed off to attend the afternoon session in person.

The hearing was held in a glass-walled room overlooking the Hudson River and New York City, a constant reminder of why we were there and what was at stake. Some of the stories revealed a complete loss of electronic communication—such as Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer reporting on using a whiteboard outside City Hall to update residents on developments, then sending CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) volunteers on foot to different neighborhoods with paper flyers to post. Others showed a communication breakdown of a different sort, such as a city manager who was trying to make arrangements for portable cell sites being told by the wireless provider's customer service rep to "look it up on the Internet," when the whole city had no access to the Internet.

There were also stories of things that worked, requested specifically by Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel. Some, of course, were subject to interpretation (spin, perhaps?), such as the wireless phone company official who felt the fact that 75% of the network remained functional was a success story that overshadowed the flip side of that story—that 25% of the wireless network across ten states failed during and after Sandy.

On the other hand, representatives of local TV and radio stations (which, curiously, were not covering the hearing) told days of advance preparations and arrangements to transmit TV station news audio on co-owned radio stations, in order to serve people who had no TV access. The keys to success, without exception, were preparation and training.

As hams, of course, we are familiar with this recipe for success, as it is the key to our own ability to provide communications "when all else fails." Disappointingly, there was no

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*FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski told the audience that "Sandy revealed just how essential it is to have communications available when we most need it, during times of disaster and emergency." He also told CQ that ham radio should be included in the FCC's inquiry into lessons learned from last fall's superstorm.*



mention of amateur radio in any of the presentations, nor in any of the commissioners' comments. So, during a break, I spoke with Commissioner Rosenworcel and said I'd been hoping to hear something about amateur radio as one of the "things that worked."

She responded very enthusiastically, saying "I saw in the aftermath of Katrina the capabilities of amateur radio. It should be looked into as part of this proceeding." She recommended that amateurs with first-hand knowledge of amateur radio successes in disaster communication file written comments in the FCC's inquiry. Details of how to do that are in a sidebar in this month's "Riley's Rambblings" column on page 38.

At the end of the hearing, I approached Chairman Genachowski to ask the same question. As soon as I introduced myself, he smiled broadly and said, "Ham radio! Great! Glad you're here." When I asked about including the role of hams in disaster communications, he responded, "You're absolutely right. Ham radio should be part of this." He added, "We're going to have more hearings on this topic," and suggested that I get in touch with a senior staff member to see about including ham radio in one of the future hearings. He also reminded me that, "You know, I'm the only FCC Chairman, as far as I know, who's attended Hamvention@," referring to his surprise visit to Dayton in 2011.

Finally, when I spoke with the staffer who'd been recommended, he replied, "We've got you guys covered. The Commission [staff] is fully aware of the contributions of amateur radio" and promised to work on including a presentation on amateur radio in a future hearing.

So ... in case you were wondering whether the folks at the top at the FCC know amateur radio exists, and understand its capabilities, the answer I got from my afternoon in Hoboken was an unqualified "yes."

### Contest Scores and Columns

On to more everyday matters ... this issue introduces a variety of changes in CQ. First of all, we are very pleased to be able to bring you the SSB results of the 2012 CQ World-Wide DX Contest this month, a full four months earlier than in the past. A big thank-you to CQWW Contest Director Randy Thompson, K5ZD, the hard-working volunteers of the CQWW Contest Committee, and all of you who met our new five-day log submission deadline.

We are also introducing one new column and three new columnists in this issue: "CQ World Wide" is our new monthly roundup of ham radio news and activities from around the world, coordinated by Tom Smerk, AA6TS; CQ DX Hall of Famer Wayne Mills, N7NG, is our new DX Editor; and Ron Ochu, KO0Z, picks up the reins of the "Learning Curve" as our new Beginners Editor. Ron and Wayne were introduced last month; you'll find more about Tom at the beginning of his column on page 60. Welcome aboard to all three of you.

And of course, since this is April, we have our annual visit from Professor Heisselult on page 30. I'm sure you will find his article to be enlightening as always.

It's springtime! Pack up your rig and head out for some outdoor hamming!

73, Rich W2VU



*FCC Commissioners (L-R) Ajit Pai, Jessica Rosenworcel, and Mignon Clyburn; and Chairman Julius Genachowski, listen to testimony during the FCC's February field hearing on lessons from superstorm Sandy at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey.*