

RON WYDEN
OREGON

RANKING MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

221 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5244

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3703

COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

September 12, 2018

Hans Vestberg
Chief Executive Officer
Verizon Communications Inc.
1095 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Vestberg,

I am writing with real concern that Verizon throttled the data of wildland firefighters, public servants who put their lives and livelihoods on the line to save communities from wildfires.

As you must know, wildfires in the West are getting bigger, hotter, and more difficult to fight. This summer, the fires are so bad, and the smoke is so thick, that people in my home state had to flee their communities to find pockets of breathable air, hoping that the possessions they left behind would be there when they return. It has long been my goal to help these communities stay safe, to prevent fire damage to community buildings and homes, and to support the heroic firefighters we have in the West by keeping them safe and providing them resources to more efficiently fight these fires.

I was alarmed by recent media stories reporting that California fire officials had their unlimited Verizon data plans throttled while fighting one of the largest fires on the west coast. Even more alarming was that at one point Verizon's customer service representatives apparently suggested that the firefighters' data problems could be resolved if they paid more in order to receive truly unlimited data. This is nothing short of Verizon nickel and diming first responders, while limiting their ability to communicate and effectively respond to emergencies.

In order to help me better understand what happened in this incident, please answer the following questions:

1. Please explain in detail how and why Verizon throttled the unlimited data plans for the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District.

911 NE 11TH AVENUE
SUITE 630
PORTLAND, OR 97232
(503) 326-7525

405 EAST 8TH AVE
SUITE 2020
EUGENE, OR 97401
(541) 431-0229

SAC ANNEX BUILDING
105 FIR ST
SUITE 201
LA GRANDE, OR 97850
(541) 962-7691

U.S. COURTHOUSE
310 WEST 6TH ST
ROOM 118
MEDFORD, OR 97501
(541) 858-5122

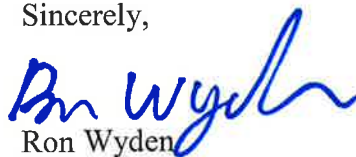
THE JAMISON BUILDING
131 NW HAWTHORNE AVE
SUITE 107
BEND, OR 97701
(541) 330-9142

707 13TH ST. SE
SUITE 285
SALEM, OR 97301
(503) 589-4555

2. When requested by fire officials to reinstate their unlimited data while they were fighting a wildfire, why did Verizon not immediately stop throttling the data plans of these firefighters? Why did Verizon only stop throttling the firefighters' data after they switched to a more expensive data plan?
3. Please list all instances during the past three years in which Verizon throttled data for plans used by firefighters in Oregon?
4. I am happy to see you have temporarily stopped throttling the data of first responders on the West Coast and Hawaii. Will this practice end when Verizon has decided that the natural disaster is over? And, will Verizon stop throttling first responders and firefighters across the rest of the United States as well?
5. What resources and procedures are you putting in place to ensure that firefighters whose accounts are being throttled can receive immediate assistance to remove data limits, particularly during a fire or other natural disasters?
6. Verizon has committed to remove data restrictions around emergency situations and for responders that Verizon knows are fighting fires, but in Oregon many firefighters are coming from out of state to help with the effort. How does Verizon ensure that firefighters from other parts of the country are not being throttled or capped while they are fighting wildfires?

I would appreciate answers to my questions as soon as possible, but no later than September 28, 2018.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator