

**Presentation of Kenneth Moran  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Good Morning Chairman Martin, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps, and Adelstein. In my presentation this morning, I will provide an overview of the actions the Commission has taken over the last few weeks after Hurricane Katrina made landfall in the Gulf Coast region. I will also provide a brief status report on what has been accomplished thus far in restoring communications to the impacted territory.

Later in today's presentation, you will hear from industry representatives themselves, but I wanted to take a moment to commend the industries and the tremendous efforts they have made in repairing the infrastructure to restore communications service to the disaster zone. These extraordinary efforts are being performed by employees of the communications industry – many of whom may have suffered their own personal losses, yet still continue to work to provide services to all.

**STATUS OF AFFECTED INDUSTRIES**

Hurricane Katrina knocked out more than 3 million customer phone lines in the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama area. The wireline telecommunications network sustained enormous damage both to the switching centers that route calls and to the lines used to connect buildings and customers to the network. Local wireless networks also sustained considerable damage – more than a thousand cell sites were knocked out of service by the hurricane. During this disaster, millions of telephone calls simply have not been able to get through. Of the 41

broadcast radio stations located in New Orleans and the surrounding area, only two AM and two FM stations remained on the air in the wake of the hurricane.

Through the Commission's network outage reports and industry data, we understand that extreme efforts have been – and are being – made to maintain and restore service in the disaster zone. Broadcasters are making every effort to get stations on-the-air, even at significantly reduced power, to provide survivors with important information. Wireline carriers have crews working to repair switching centers and customer lines. Both commercial and public safety wireless providers have been grappling with downed towers, damaged backhaul networks, and pervasive power outages. Satellite service providers have helped to bridge some of the gaps left by the outages by, for instance, providing satellite phones and video links to law enforcement officials, medical personnel, emergency relief personnel, and news outlets.

Through the Herculean efforts of the industries, progress has been made, but much work is yet to be done to completely restore services to consumers. Based on official FCC network outage reports, as of September 14, 2005, there are approximately 350,000 customers out of service in the Gulf Coast area (33,000 in Mississippi, and 318,000 in Louisiana). Three 911 call centers remain out of service in Louisiana (none in Mississippi and Alabama). Finally, approximately 800 high capacity long distance links remain out of service in the Gulf Coast area, with more than 650 and over 100 out of service in Louisiana and Mississippi, respectively.

Based on unofficial reports from affected carriers, as of September 14, 2005, in the affected areas of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, approximately 24 wireless network switching stations are now fully operational. Approximately 3,000 cell sites in the most affected area are now operational. Wireless carriers report that their networks are operating at 75% or more of their pre-hurricane levels.

Based on unofficial reports from affected stations and operators, as of September 14, 2005, approximately 90 AM and FM radio stations are on-the-air in the disaster zone in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. There are approximately 39 radio stations still off-the-air in the affected areas. Nineteen TV stations are on-the-air in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. There are 7 TV station in Louisiana still off-the-air. There are over 30 cable systems with total operational status in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Over 25 cable systems are partially operational, and 10 systems are non-operational. This translates into restored cable service for an estimated 520,000 cable subscribers out of the areas' approximately 950,000 total subscribers.

## **COMMISSION ACTIONS**

As you know, on August 30<sup>th</sup>, the Commission established an internal Task Force to coordinate hurricane response efforts. The Task Force's activities centered around three major goals: (1) Provide the impacted industries with regulatory relief to help restore service; (2) Conduct industry outreach and coordinate with other Federal Agencies; and (3) Provide information and assistance to consumers and evacuees. Hundreds of FCC employees have been directly involved in Hurricane relief efforts, and the Commission has stayed open on weekends in order to be responsive to requests by consumers, the industries and other Federal agencies.

### **Regulatory Relief**

The Commission quickly moved to take immediate action to provide regulatory relief in order to facilitate the resumption of communications services and to authorize the use of temporary communications services for use by disaster relief personnel and evacuees in shelters. At the start of the disaster, the Commission notified all communications providers that it would provide streamlined treatment for requests for special temporary authority (STA) in order to aid

them in resuming and maintaining operations in areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The Commission has granted over 50 STA requests and has granted nearly one hundred requests for temporary frequency assignments. The Commission also has taken actions on a number of requests for temporary waiver of its rules. In general, STAs were granted within 24 hours, most were approved within 4 hours of the request. Examples of some of these actions include:

- Granting STAs to carriers for emergency microwave links to replace damaged and destroyed T-1s in their backhaul networks. Granting STAs to enable first responders coming from outside the affected area to use their radios so they could assist in rescue and recovery efforts.
- Granting station requests to allow television or radio stations to resume broadcasting with modified or emergency facilities, and where commercial broadcasters' facilities were damaged or destroyed, this relief made it possible for the stations to use operational facilities of non-commercial stations to provide crucial information to their communities.

The Commission also has released several public notices and quickly adopted orders to provide temporary relief. For example, on September 1st, the Wireless Bureau extended all filing deadlines, construction requirements, and discontinuance of service rules for wireless licensees in the affected areas by 60 days. Further, the Commission granted a temporary waiver for certain carrier change requirements to allow customers whose long distance service has been disrupted by Hurricane Katrina to be connected to an operational long distance provider. We also granted a temporary waiver of the Commission's rule for aging residential numbers for customers in the affected areas. By waiving this rule, wireline carriers will now be able to disconnect temporarily customers' telephone service, upon request, to avoid billing issues, and reinstate the same number when the service is reconnected for customers in the affected areas. In addition, a 60-day extension was granted to wireline carriers operating in Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama for the filing of Form 477 local competition and broadband data. This

extension also applied to carriers that rely on personnel, facilities, or records located in these states.

### **Outreach to Industries and Coordination with Federal Agencies**

The Commission has been working closely with industry as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Communications System (NCS). The Commission is continuously reaching out to communications companies serving the affected area – wireline and wireless network providers, broadcasters, cable providers, satellite providers, Wireless Internet Service Providers - or WISPs - (including trade associations for these providers) – to assess the companies’ status and determine what they need to resume operations. The Commission provides the critical information about the necessary resources to FEMA and NCS, who are responsible for ensuring that priority needs are met. The Commission updates FEMA and NCS daily on these evolving needs.

For example, the Commission identified wireline central offices that could be operational if provided fuel to power on-site generators. Commission staff used its High Frequency Direction Finding Center to survey radio station broadcasts to determine whether stations were on the air, and also contacted each of the approximately 160 broadcast TV and radio stations in the disaster zone to determine their status and needs. We worked with carriers and industry organizations to assess the extent of damage which has facilitated restoration of critical network components and installation and maintenance of temporary “cell sites on wheels.”

The Commission is responsible for providing the National Coordinating Center (NCC) with information on communications companies’ operational status. This near real-time data is filed electronically by carriers through the Network Outage Reporting System and is used to prepare reports reflecting the overall health of the various communications networks. This

information is provided daily to the Department of Homeland Security and was used to update the National Coordination Center Situation Reports. The Commission also has been coordinating with the Interagency Coordinating Council on Individuals with Disabilities, organized by the Department of Homeland Security, to ensure that the needs of the disability community are addressed in the coordinated federal relief efforts.

In addition, the Commission has worked closely with the communications industry to help identify resources for use by disaster response personnel. The agency both transmits this information to NCC and facilitates industry's communication with other federal officials. For example, we recently granted an STA to Time Domain for an ultra-wideband through the wall imaging system to help law enforcement authorities locate hurricane victims, and special temporary authority was granted to Intel to set up Wi-Max broadband communications systems to provide Internet service at Red Cross relief centers. The Commission also coordinated a number of frequency assignments with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Defense to support ground, air-to-ground, and ship-to-ship communications by various military services. The Commission's Field Agents assisted the State of Florida in resolving severe interference to their disaster relief communications in the New Orleans area, and helped resolve reports of interference to amateur radio operators that were relaying information on search and rescue operations and relief efforts in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Restoration efforts have not been limited to traditional service providers only. Although not licensed by the Commission, WISPs have helped to restore communications throughout existing service coverage areas, in over 400 affected locations. Using technologies that are flexible enough to deploy full scale, multi-mile networks within just one to two days, the WISP

industry has also been working tirelessly to assist in the communications needs of public safety professionals, including FEMA and state and local police. Often WISPs are working to provide service coverage in more rural areas – areas like Woolmarket Township, MS, where the communications service provided by WISPs is the only available means of communications for local authorities and relief centers. While WISPs from around the country have provided both personnel and equipment to assist in relief efforts, WISPs already operating in the affected areas are putting forth tremendous efforts to provide access to communications in their local communities. We would like to extend our thanks to Part-15.org and its Chair, Mike Anderson, for assisting in the overall coordination of WISPs' efforts. These grassroots broadband service providers have demonstrated their dedication to providing communications services, wherever they are needed.

#### **Assistance to Consumers and Evacuees**

While the Commission has focused its efforts on regulatory relief and coordination efforts with other Federal agencies, it also has recognized that consumers in the Gulf Coast and evacuees to other areas need information and assistance. Since the hurricane struck, including during the weekends, the Commission manned its toll-free consumer line to help individuals get access to critical information about telecommunications and broadcast services in the affected area. The Commission also established a special webpage to provide information on all of the Commission's actions, and provide other valuable information to consumers, industry and other agencies. Additional examples of Commission actions to address consumer concerns include:

- Issuance of a public notice that required wireless carriers to report on steps they are taking to protect displaced customers who are unable to pay their bills from having their service cut off.
- Emergency relief to allow a temporary broadcast station for the hard-hit community of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and a new low power FM station to operate adjacent to the

Houston Astrodome in order to provide emergency information to evacuees housed in the vicinity.

- The Media Bureau also released a Public Notice to remind video program distributors of the need to make emergency information regarding Hurricane Katrina evacuation and relief effort accessible to persons with hearing and vision disabilities.
- Commission staff also coordinated discussions between FEMA and a major Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) provider to set up free televisions at disaster relief facilities and to provide a nationwide channel for disaster emergency services programming.

Finally, the Commission also has taken steps to facilitate disaster relief efforts and fundraising efforts by temporarily reassigning the toll free 800 number “1-800-RED-CROSS” to the National Chapter of the American Red Cross. This action will facilitate the disaster relief operations and fundraising efforts of the American Red Cross – the only nongovernmental agency with a specified lead role in the National Response Plan – by providing an easily-recognizable centralized telephonic point of contact for this important organization.

Additionally, the Media Bureau temporarily waived certain rules for non-commercial television and radio stations in the affected areas to allow those stations to air fundraising programming to aid disaster relief efforts.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the upcoming months, Commission staff will continue to work with other Federal agencies and the communications industry and take whatever actions are necessary to assist in the recovery effort. Equally important, we will also continue to reach out to consumers impacted by this tragedy to help them in any way we can.