



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE  
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

September 14, 2021

The Honorable Garret Graves  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2402 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Graves:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern for those who are harmed by Hurricane Ida and asking the Federal Communications Commission to use its authority to help restore wireless service in the affected area. The agency shares your concern and is using all tools available to ensure that communications are restored as swiftly as possible.

A critical part of this effort involves the Commission working directly with wireless carriers on their implementation of the Wireless Resiliency Cooperative Framework. Under this agreement, each of the nationwide wireless providers have committed to providing for reasonable roaming under disaster arrangements when technically feasible and otherwise fostering mutual aid during emergencies. No FCC approval is needed for carriers to implement this kind of disaster roaming, and we understand that each of the wireless companies have opened up roaming in the affected areas to the extent that their networks will allow, so that they, collectively, could serve the maximum population in the affected area with the current coverage available. The Commission continues to monitor the effectiveness of these actions.

These efforts began even before Hurricane Ida made landfall in the United States. On Sunday, August 29, the Commission started communicating with nationwide wireless providers through our regular incident preparedness and response activities. Part of this communication entailed surveying wireless providers' roaming abilities and encouraging the implementation of roaming agreements. Because these arrangements vary by technology (e.g., 3G, 4G/LTE) and market location, one provider might roam on another provider's 3G network in one area and a different provider's 4G/LTE network in a different area while also accepting roaming traffic on their own network. Commission staff confirmed with wireless providers by August 30 that several roaming agreements were activated around New Orleans and lower Louisiana, while one agreement was under evaluation for technical feasibility. By September 1, additional roaming agreements were implemented in Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

After landfall, we understand that all of the providers performed evaluations to determine the health of their networks and whether they could handle additional traffic, and those that found they could opened up their networks for roaming. To augment these efforts, some providers also brought in temporary mobile communications solutions—such as Cells on Wheels, Satellite Cells on Light Trucks, Very Small Aperture Terminals, Microwave Kits, transportable generators, and transportable towers—to provide additional capacity and coverage as they work to repair their networks.

Finally, the Commission is helping facilitate communications recovery in Louisiana through the following additional efforts, among others:

- Establishing a website at <https://www.fcc.gov/Ida> prior to landfall as a centralized location for all FCC information related to Hurricane Ida, including emergency communications tips in nine languages, including French, tailored media advisories for broadcasters in the affected areas, downloadable, audio Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish, communications status reports, and other content;
- Deploying FCC staff to Louisiana and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Response Coordination Center in Dallas, Texas to support spectrum management, perform damage assessments, and prioritize recovery efforts;
- In coordination with FEMA and other federal partners, activating our Disaster Information Reporting System for more than 100 counties in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama;
- Publishing the first comprehensive assessment of Hurricane Ida's impact on communications networks and providing daily updates on the status of communications networks in the affected areas to both government partners and the public;
- Providing technical assistance to state 911 coordinators, State Emergency Operations Centers, 911 call centers, and the Louisiana Association of Broadcasters;
- Engaging in daily coordination with Federal, state, and local partners, as well as with industry (including broadcasters, wireless and wireline carriers, satellite operators, trade associations and others) to help coordinate the transport of necessary communications equipment to help fill communications gaps;
- Facilitating requests from Louisiana broadcasters, amateur radio operators, and wireless providers for fuel, generators, debris clearance, and rule waivers to support recovery efforts;
- Waiving the FCC's numbering rules to allow service providers to port telephone numbers to areas outside the affected areas during periods of service disruption and to ensure that hurricane victims' phone numbers are not reassigned; and
- Waiving certain rules and deadlines associated with various federal benefit programs, including E-Rate, Rural Health Care, Lifeline, High Cost, the Emergency Connectivity Fund, and the Emergency Broadband Benefit, so that hurricane victims do not lose their federal benefits because of non-usage or missed deadlines.

We are closely monitoring these efforts as wireless providers are still completing their damage assessments, confirming the operational status of their networks, and making repairs.

Above all, please know that the Commission is committed to helping facilitate the restoration of wireless communications services to disaster victims in Louisiana. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Rosenworcel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Rosenworcel