

Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Questions Response

Introduction

Cablevision appreciates the opportunity to discuss our preparation for Tropical Storm Irene and its impact on our operations in Connecticut.

More than 700,000 Connecticut residents were reported to have lost power. Despite the scale of the storm, the challenges presented by widespread power outages, and the fact that many of Cablevision's employees were personally affected, Cablevision worked around the clock to swiftly and efficiently restore service. We also dedicated substantial resources both to the preparation for the storm and to the response after the storm, adding technicians and field crew from other regions, repairing electronics, fiber cuts, downed drops, and managing power failures over a broad area.

Utility Companies

- **Preparation**
 - **What are the best practices for readiness? Response?**

Planning is critical to successful storm recovery. To that end, several years ago Cablevision adopted a multi-pronged approach to address interruptions resulting from storms in a timely and efficient manner. First, we have a Disaster/Storm Preparedness and Restoration plan ("Plan") that (1) sets forth specific steps for disaster recovery; (2) allocates areas of responsibility and staffing levels, and (3) creates specific communication and coordination flows. Second, Cablevision routinely engages in employee education and review of its procedures for improvement. Third, Cablevision scales its staffing and equipment as needed in anticipation of a storm, including increasing staffing levels, deploying additional generators at major distribution and customer response centers, and mobilizing crews from outside the area to insure that service disruptions are minimized. Finally, Cablevision keeps customers informed through IVRs, telephone, and email updates before, during, and after a storm.

- **How did you fare for readiness? Response?**

Given the scope and severity of the storm, Cablevision's readiness and response were effective in mitigating customer impacts. As stated above, Cablevision devoted substantial resources in preparation for the storm to ensure that crews and equipment could be dispatched swiftly to address critical network failures once safe to do so. This included warehousing extra equipment, "over" staffing in the critical areas of technical, field and customer service, reserving hotel rooms and providing food and water for our employees.

- **What was the damage from Tropical Storm Irene? How many lines were affected? How many customers were affected?**

Of all of the markets Cablevision serves in the tri-state area, Connecticut was by far the hardest hit by Irene. Immediately after the storm, we believe that approximately 50% of our customers in Connecticut could not utilize our services, primarily as a result of the lack of commercial power in their home or business. Our services do not work unless there is power to the home to power our devices in the home.

Services to these customers began to return as power in their homes was restored, since there is a high correlation between the power to our network “outside the home” and power to the home. In a small percentage of cases, power to the home could be restored and our services would not come back up. The problem in this instance could either be a “downed drop” from our street-side network to the home, or – more likely – a power supply on our network in the neighborhood did not yet have commercial power restored. In those instances, we deployed small standby generators to power our network (provided there were no related safety issues as a result of the storm damage) and bring our services back up in the home. Our goal was to identify these anomalies as quickly as possible to return service to the home. We used calls from customers who had power in their home and diagnostic tools in our network to identify these situations and dispatch resources to get the services back up.

Cablevision also deployed personnel to the State’s OEM site and to Connecticut Light & Power (“CL&P”) and United Illuminating (“UI”) Emergency Operations Centers to exchange information in real-time and improve the accuracy of the information we were using to plan our recovery efforts.

- **What was the extent of your disaster preparedness plan? Please provide details.**
 - **Were we prepared for a category 1 hurricane?**
 - **What damage could have been done?**
 - **Where/how could we have done better?**

Cablevision’s Plan is an extensive confidential document detailing steps that Cablevision must take in the event of a storm. As described above, Cablevision not only scales to the anticipated severity of a storm (in this case a category 1 hurricane) but also ensures that its employees are able to effectively address any disruptions as quickly and safely as possible. While there is no way for Cablevision to know what damage the storm could have caused, Cablevision assumed that the storm would cause power outages and downed lines resulting in service interruptions. Based on Cablevision’s swift response to the storm and its effective implementation of its Plan, Cablevision was able to minimize disruptions to the extent possible.

- **What lessons did you learn?**

Cablevision’s experience with Tropical Storm Irene underscored the necessity to maintain and implement an effective storm preparedness plan and to maintain open lines of communications with power utilities. Of particular help to the restoration process was Cablevision’s ability to station employees at the Emergency Operations Centers of power utilities to share real time information.

- **What are your standards in regards to tree trimming? Have these standards changed over the past 10 years?**

Because the utility companies own the poles, tree trimming is primarily undertaken by them. Cablevision performs tree trimming only when required to repair our network.

- **Staffing/Labor**

- **How many line crews were deployed during peak restoration?** Cablevision deployed more than 220 technicians during peak restoration.
- **How many line crews were brought in from other places, if any?** During the storm, we brought 35 additional field personnel from outside Connecticut.
- **How many line crews are employed by your company now vs. 2000?** Cablevision is unable to provide this information, but consistently re-evaluates its staffing needs.
- **What are your policies/standards regarding hours of work (hours/shift)?** During the storm crews worked during daylight hours (12 to 14 hours). In addition, we deployed personnel on a 24-hour basis to maintain temporary power for our plant.

- **Communication**

- **How was the communication between your company and municipalities?**
 - **What worked? What didn't?**
 - **How could this communication be improved?**

During a severe storm such as Irene, Cablevision's primary priorities are the restoration of service and the safety of its crews and customers. When information about the impact of the storm and ongoing remedies became available, Cablevision contacted appropriate government personnel with periodic updates. We spoke to PURA officials before the storm hit the State to verify communications protocols and to ensure that State officials had contact information for key points of contact at the Company in the event they had questions or needed us to provide assistance.

In addition, Cablevision worked closely with the Communications Task Force established by the State to coordinate post-storm communication services restoration efforts. We also participated in daily meetings and conference calls, provided regular updates on service outages and progress in restoring service, and obtained assistance from the group with streamlining our communication processes with CL&P and UI. Cablevision further believes that placing its personnel at the Emergency Operations Centers of both electric utilities during future severe storms would greatly improve communications between the electric utilities and our company.

- **How was the communication between your company and your customers?**
 - **What worked? What didn't?**
 - **How could this communication be improved?**

Cablevision's communications with its customers was very effective. In anticipation of the storm, Cablevision contacted customers via telephone and e-mail messages informing them about the potential for the storm to cause service interruptions and advising them that we would be monitoring the system and that it would not be necessary for them to call should they lose service, because we would see their Cablevision-authorized devices like cable modems and set-top boxes come offline. They were advised that without electrical power in their home or business their cable services would not work until power was restored. During the storm, Cablevision implemented an IVR (Interactive Voice Response) process to receive customer calls and update customers on interruptions and restoration. Customers could also opt to receive periodic telephone updates. In addition, once the storm had passed and power outages were being restored, customers were advised to contact us if their service did not return when their power was restored, so we could work to minimize any gaps between the restoration of electrical service and cable service. In these instances, technicians were scheduled to repair the problem, backup generators were deployed on a temporary basis to power our plant or other localized actions were taken. Additionally, we have backup generators on all of our key call centers, network operations centers and field operations centers.