

AT&T Answers to Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Questions

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

As an international communications provider, AT&T has vast experience in dealing with all manner of natural disasters be they hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, tornadoes and the like. This experience has provided us with invaluable knowledge that we make part of our everyday routine be it in designing our networks, investing in infrastructure, or training our personnel.

We began preparing for Hurricane Irene as the storm initially formed in the Atlantic and approached the island of Puerto Rico. We monitored the storm and its projected path and readied our networks and personnel in Florida and the rest of the Southeastern United States and then up along the Eastern Seaboard as the storm's path became more defined.

In Connecticut, we activated our Local Response Center (LRC) a state-of-the-art facility in Meriden which was just recently completed. This LRC is one of twenty-five such facilities we have in the country and is example of the best practices we have put into place as a result of dealing with similar storms in the Southeastern United States. The Connecticut LRC is located in a secure facility and houses AT&T personnel on an around-the-clock basis and is augmented by expertise and specialists from around the country. It is designed to allow AT&T to prepare for and respond to natural disasters by housing key company network leadership in a single facility. This allows for the company to understand and address the full breadth of challenges faced during such an incident and to bring to bear our resources in the most timely and effective manner. Connecticut's LRC was activated on a virtual-basis on Wednesday, August 25th and went live on Saturday, August 27th.

In addition to our personnel at our local LRC, AT&T staffed the state's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on a 24/7 basis beginning on Saturday August 27th and ending on Friday, September 2nd.

Nationally, because the storm threatened other areas we serve, we activated our LRC outside of Philadelphia covering the mid-Atlantic states and our LRC in North Carolina serving that state. We activated our National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) as an additional tier of oversight and support above the LRC level. The NEOC pulls in an additional, senior-tier of nationwide management and engages Network Emergency Management Preparedness and Response protocols which bring national resources and extraordinary grants of authority and latitude to waive rules, commandeer resources, exceed budgets, and draft personnel as necessary to get the job done.

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

On the whole and understanding the scope and complexity of the storm, AT&T fared quite well. Hurricane Irene was over 500 miles wide and its track put more than 65 million Americans in its path. It was also a particularly slow moving storm which allowed its relatively lower wind speeds to in many respects cause greater damage by subjecting areas to the storm for longer periods of time.

AT&T had significant numbers of assets and customers directly in the path of the storm all up and down the Eastern seaboard. The scope and duration of power outages from Virginia to Vermont along with significant damage to public infrastructure to bridges and roads posed a particular challenge to restoration efforts.

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

At its peak, AT&T Connecticut had approximately 14,000 or about 2 percent of our wired access lines out of service at any given time as a result of Hurricane Irene. This repair volume was addressed as areas were made safe by power and tree crews and by Friday, September 2nd we had returned to more normal daily repair levels.

AT&T provides the state's emergency 911 system infrastructure and it performed remarkably well. At no time did the system go down as a result of the storm and the multiple redundancies built into the system allowed calls to be rerouted past trouble spots.

There are more than 840,000 utility poles in Connecticut approximately 95 percent of which are jointly owned by the electric companies and AT&T. During storm restoration efforts we replaced approximately 590 poles. Pole replacement efforts require close coordination between all of the parties with facilities located on a pole including power companies, cable companies, in some cases municipalities, other telecommunications carriers with facilities on the pole, and AT&T.

AT&T faced the same issues with the loss of commercial power as other businesses and residents faced. As a result, AT&T made over 1,000 generator deployments across the state as well as used fixed generating capacity in our central offices, as needed. Throughout the storm restoration process AT&T spent over \$1 million dollars for fuel for its generators and vehicles.

- **What was the extent of your disaster preparedness plan? Please provide details.**

The scope of AT&T's business has required us to learn to anticipate and respond to a wide variety of man-made and natural disasters. We have taken what we have learned from those disasters and in-grained these experiences into everything we do at AT&T from how we design our networks, invest in infrastructure, and train our employees. In addition, as one of the largest communications companies in the world, we have access to resources, knowledge and expertise that few, if any, companies can meet.

As previously noted, our LRC facility is an integral part of our disaster preparedness plan and helped us to provide valuable information to local and state officials while speeding our recovery efforts. In addition, we undertake strategic planning and training and pre-position likely needed resources like generators, utility poles, MREs, fuel trucks, and water for our employees and arrange for contractors to undertake duties like refueling.

Through agreements with the Communications Workers of America we are able to mobilize our workforce for times of increased need and call upon our out-of-state employees and resources when they are needed.

AT&T embedded our operations staff with the two electric companies in order to facilitate communications and cooperation and aid restoration efforts.

A critical element of our efforts to maximize network reliability is our ability to swiftly respond when disaster strikes. Through AT&T's world-class Network Disaster Recovery (NDR) organization, we bring unmatched resources to help ensure the flow of both wireless and wired communications during times of need, all backed by centralized command and control designed to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency. We've invested more than \$600 million in our NDR program which includes a fleet of more than 320 technology and support trailers and specialized equipment that can be quickly deployed anywhere in the world in response to natural or man-made disasters. We monitor and maintain our networks 24/7 and conduct several readiness drills throughout the year to ensure that our networks and personnel are prepared to respond in a moment's notice. AT&T deployed two self-contained C.O.L.T. (cell on light truck) satellite vehicles to the state and at the direction of state and federal officials deployed them to the areas where they determined they were needed.

Lastly, AT&T took enormous steps to ensure the safety and security of our workforce across the wide area impacted by this storm. We launched our “Yes Okay Hotline” that allows us to account for the well-being of our employees by having them tell us of their status after the storm through voice and text messaging. We went so far as to ask police and other public safety personnel to check on the safety of some employees we had not heard from via our outreach efforts.

- **Were we prepared for a category 1 hurricane?**

Yes we were, though all parties can always do more to prepare and take lessons from this storm to better prepare in the future.

- **What damage could have been done?**

Despite the widespread destruction, more than \$10 billion in estimated damages and hardships faced by Connecticut residents, businesses, and governments, the reality is that things could have always been worse including greater property damage and loss of life. Our company’s experiences with larger storms including Hurricane Andrew in Miami and Hurricane Katrina along the gulf coast provides ample evidence of the destructive power of nature.

- **Where/how could we have done better?**

While we are still digesting all the experiences and learnings for this event, as the state looks into the issue of power restoration and understanding the importance of communications networks, it may want to consider making the restoration of commercial power to communications infrastructure a priority in the same manner as it identifies other important facilities for such treatment, like hospitals for example.

The telecommunications task force that was established at the state EOC was a valuable resource to both the state and industry and one we would encourage being put into place as a standard practice in the future at the EOC.

Wireless communications has become the most widely used method of communication, yet the reality is in Connecticut that there are places where wireless network coverage is still lacking because there is an absence of towers to make service available. Yet Connecticut has statutory prohibitions against the construction of towers in certain areas like state forests and watersheds which could help to eliminate these coverage problems. Those prohibitions ought to be eliminated and concerns about the impact of towers on the environment which gave rise to the prohibitions in the first place,

ought to be dealt with as requirements in the tower approval process through mediation steps placed on the applicant.

Our Connecticut installation and repair technicians are licensed by the state and carry a Public Services Technician (PST) license. While we wholeheartedly support this licensing requirement we did find it cumbersome to deal with when trying to bring nearly identically trained AT&T personnel from other states in to work in Connecticut on storm restoration on an emergency basis. The legislature might want to consider amending the license requirement to allow employees of certain companies from other states to work in Connecticut without holding a formal Connecticut PST license during times that the Governor declares a state of emergency so long as they are licensed elsewhere.

- **What lessons did you learn?**

First, we approach this period as a learning experience. Second we were powerfully reminded of the extraordinary dedication and talent of our Connecticut work force. Even while their communities, homes, and families faced the storm and its aftermath, they rose to impressive levels to restore service to our customers.

We learned that even under extreme circumstances and in dealing with a storm that required AT&T to ready itself along the entire eastern seaboard and to respond to damages and outages across an enormous region of the country, that our network, system, processes, and most importantly our people, performed very well.

We are continuing our own self-evaluation of our performance to determine how we can do better next time, not just here in Connecticut but throughout our enterprise. Undoubtedly the issue of commercial power reliability and restoration will be an integral part of that review.

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

Given the safety issues involved with tree trimming in areas near the electrical space on poles, the state's electric companies typically take the lead in such work yet AT&T contributes towards the costs of such work. This is same policy we have followed previously.

- **How many line crews were deployed during peak restoration?**

At the peak of our efforts, AT&T had more than 2,000 technical employees working on restoration efforts.

- **How many line crews were brought in from other places, if any?**

AT&T brought in 135 technical employees from Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Texas and Wisconsin along with necessary equipment for their use. These additional employees helped us to repair our customers' service and complete other restoration work in a more timely manner. With local telephone operations in 22 states, AT&T has the ability to call upon employees and resources outside of Connecticut when necessary, as we did in this circumstance. Management employees across the country, from every department, supported our efforts. Likewise, Connecticut employees are called upon when disasters affect other states. Finally, AT&T engaged emergency contractors, such as for generator refueling, for example, to allow our technicians to focus on service restoration.

- **How many line crews are employed by your company now vs. 2000?**

AT&T's business has undergone a rapid transformation in the 18 years since the local phone market was open to competition and even more so in the last decade. In 1994, AT&T had 100 percent of the local wired phone market in the state (Verizon was the local phone company in roughly one-half of Greenwich). Today the company has less than 45 percent of the same market. In the year 2000, we had 2.34 million retail local access lines in the state while at the end of 2010 we had 1.45 million, a 51 percent decrease. As our traditional wireline phone business has shrunk so too has our need for employees servicing that business. However, we continue to maintain a similar – in fact slightly higher - level of installation and maintenance technicians per access lines this year then we had in 2000; 4.9 technicians per 10k access line in 2011 versus 4.6 technicians per 10k access lines in the year 2000.

- **What are your policies/standards regarding hours of work (hours/shift)?**

Consistent with the terms of the company's contract with the Communications Workers of America, from August 29th to September 6th, AT&T declared a "state of emergency" in Connecticut which requires employees in identified job titles to work six days a week and up to twelve hours a shift.

It is worth noting that despite the very challenging environment that our employees worked in after the storm, that they did their work in both a highly professional manner and with just one injury to an employee. While even one injury is one too many, we do believe that the policies we have in place, including policies on hours worked, helped to contribute to the excellent safety record exhibited by the company and our workers during the restoration work.

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

AT&T was in close communication with local officials both before and after the storm. Before the storm we made sure local officials had the relevant contact numbers for reporting downed wires and poles as well as other AT&T contacts. After the storm, AT&T stationed employees at the state's EOC on a 24/7 schedule. Our employees at the EOC received constant communications from municipalities through local and regional EOCs up to the state EOC.

While we believe the communication process worked well we also believe that it would be helpful for key officials in municipalities to have proper information on their telecommunications provider. In a number of cases, municipalities contacted AT&T about outages but another provider, not AT&T, provided service to that town.

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

In advance of the storm we proactively promoted consumer friendly hurricane preparedness tips with media in Connecticut and throughout the area within the storm's path. For example, we reminded consumers that cordless phones don't work without commercial power. We also promoted the different ways that consumers can contact AT&T to report outages and service problems.

We ensured that our Customer Care Team that interfaces directly with consumers when they contact AT&T had the most up-to-date network outage information in their systems so that when customers called in they would be informed that we were working to restore service to their area

We opened 37 of our 39 stores nearly immediately following the storm, even those without commercial power, in order to give our customers the opportunity to bring problems or concerns to us to have them addressed. We set up extra charging stations for our customers to use to charge their wireless phones and had extra supplies of charging accessories delivered to our stores in order to meet increased demand. At stores without commercial power we set up tables outside of our facilities and brought in portable generators to supply power for charging stations and other operations.

After the storm, we kept the public informed of our restoral efforts through media interviews and briefings with local stakeholders and provided information to government officials to use in their on-going public briefings with the media.