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January 27, 2006

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Lisa M. Fowlkes, Esquire
Assistant Chief
Enforcement Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
Room 7-C 737
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

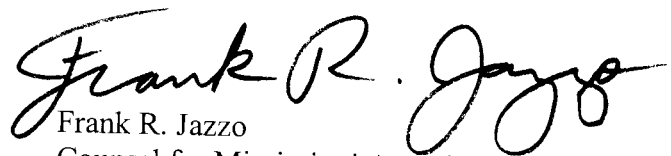
Re: Hurricane Katrina Panel Comments of Mississippi Association of Broadcasters

Dear Ms. Fowlkes:

Transmitted herewith, on behalf of the Mississippi Association of Broadcasters, are its comments to be considered by the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks.

Should any additional information be required, please contact this office.

Very truly yours,
FLETCHER, HEALD & HILDRETH, PLC


Frank R. Jazzo
Counsel for Mississippi Association of
Broadcasters

FRJ/kac
Enclosures

MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS



855 S. PEAR ORCHARD ROAD SUITE 403 RIDGELAND, MS 39157 (601) 957-9121 FAX (601) 957-9175

October 27, 2005

The Honorable Kevin Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

I'm writing to ask for your help and guidance on where to go and who to contact for broadcasters to be designated as First Responders during an emergency such as Hurricane Katrina.

Hopefully there will never be another storm like Katrina or a situation where there is so much destruction. If you will remember, several years ago, you attended the MAB Annual Convention in Gulfport, Mississippi. The hotel where we stayed and the restaurant where the Board of Directors dinner was held is now just a slab of concrete.

In a normal hurricane, our stations could possibly be without power for 24 to 48 hours and a generator would be OK and the station would have enough fuel. In this case, the devastation was so far reaching, from the Mississippi Coast (80 miles wide) all the way up through our state to Jackson which is 150 miles from the Coast. In Jackson we had Cat 2 winds and many were without power from 4 days to 2-3 weeks.

On the Tuesday after the storm, I obtained a 3000 gal truck of diesel for a TV station in Gulfport...got the secret password for it to pass through the roadblocks and sent it on its way. When they had off loaded 1000 gallons, the police came and took the truck saying they needed the fuel elsewhere. This also happened to a TV station in Hattiesburg, but they took the truck before it got to the station.

We were reduced to bootlegging 55 gallon drums of gas out of Texas in the back of pick-up trucks.

It was not the State that put a clamp on fuel, it was FEMA. In talking with a FEMA rep immediately after the storm, I was told that broadcasters were #7 on the list of responders, therefore no fuel for us.

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Mississippi Association of Broadcasters

Broadcasters need to be designated as First Responders so that any time there is a local, state or national emergency declared that broadcasters be classified as such and could obtain the fuel needed to get emergency messages out. We should also have all rights to be out on roads covering stories as any other first responders. If it were not for broadcasters, the public would not be informed of anything happening before, during, or after a storm. Also, I think we should be allowed to obtain radios that the civil defense and other public officials use so we could communicate with them during a storm. Often times, we in the media are overlooked until a major disaster happens and then everyone wants us to get emergency messages out to the public.

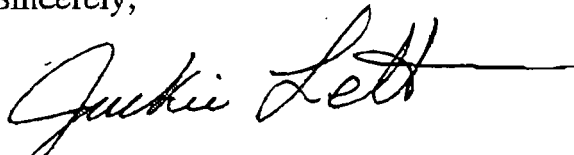
I'm finding that in Mississippi many towns and whole counties were without disaster information from 48 hours to 4 days, due to stations not having generators or most of all, lack of fuel. People were trapped in their homes with no power, tree's blocking roads and no information as to when and how they were going to be OK.

I'm enclosing a letter I received from one of my small market stations in Picayune, Mississippi which gives just a snapshot of what broadcasters do in an emergency.

This is a serious situation and one that should be taken very seriously. Please help me help my broadcasters. We need for you to point us in the right direction and help us through the maze of red tape involved.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

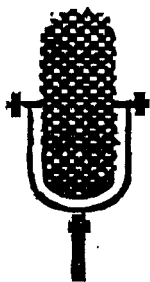
Sincerely,



Jackie Lett
President
Mississippi Association of Broadcasters

JL:km

Enclosure



WRJW
Radio

Swap Shop
Newspaper



Pearl River Communications, Inc.

Mississippi Association of Broadcasters
855 South Pear Orchard Road
Ridgeland, MS 39157

ATT: Jackie Lett, President

Dear Jackie,

I'm glad you asked!! WRJW 1320 AM was one of the few Gulf Coast Area radio stations with a tower after Katrina, and although we didn't have power, we were determined to get on the air, because national stations were full of news about New Orleans, Biloxi and Gulfport, but local residents were desperate for information about local relief efforts and help.

We had been told before the storm that either the National Guard or Pearl River County would see to it that we had a large enough generator to get on the air at our full 5000 watts after the storm, but as of Tuesday, August 30th, at 6PM we still did not have a generator. There were none to rent, and we couldn't find one to buy within a 100 mile radius. Therefore, John Pigott, our owner, asked me to let him use my personal 5800 watt generator to get our 1000 watt transmitter on the air. My generator was strong enough to run the small transmitter and the control board, along with a small light. At 7PM Tuesday evening, August 30th we were able to get on the air, with no telephone service, and very little gasoline reserve. We literally drained our station van to have enough gasoline to run the generator for about 10 hours. I headed north, and had to go as far as Kentucky to find a 10,000 watt generator. I rented a U-Haul truck, bought 6 generators, and stopped along the way back buying 5 gallon containers, filling them with gasoline. When I got back to Picayune, I had about 200 gallons, which was good, because there was no gasoline sold locally for days!! We used my generator and our listener's gasoline for about a week, until I got back!

And, our parking lot was full of people for weeks after the storm, including the local police department, county sheriff's department, emergency management personnel, red cross reps, FEMA reps, county officials, EVERYONE!! We even had reps from Hancock County and St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana asking us to help them get their message out! All came to the radio station to get on the air and let our listeners know what was going on, where to go for help, etc.... We even had local residents putting up signs in their front yards, and the local police department posting signs along with roads and highways... "WRJW is on the air!! Tune in for local information!!" Our staff was great, but after working nonstop for days, we needed help. We asked for it over the air, and before we knew it, we had a dozen volunteers here helping. Even our local Deputy Chief of Police came in and manned the front office for a while.

When our gasoline ran low, we began asking our listeners to donate a few gallons, and we had several people bring in gallon containers of gasoline, and thank us for what we were doing. They called us a light in a very dark room, or a comforting voice of reason!! One person said, "Finally!! We finally can get information about local people, help, and resources.... Thank you with all my heart!!" The general public would come to the station with needs, and we would get on the air and ask for help. Without fail, we found them what they needed. For instance, a young single mother came in with a crying baby asking for formula and diapers.... we asked our listeners to help, and within 10 minutes we had 2 cases of the formula she needed, and diapers, too! In fact, we had so many people respond, or lobby became a drop off, pick up point, and for 3 weeks after the storm, it was full of items... including water, baby formula, diapers, adult diapers, canned foods, and more!! We had to ask listeners to please stop bringing stuff in!

1 of 2

P. O. Box 907 · 2438 Highway 43 South · Picayune, MS 39466
Phone 601-798-4835 · 1-800-284-5036 · Fax 601-798-9755 · www.wrjw.com

We had no satellite service, therefore no state or national news. Our front door was blown out, sending debris and water into our business offices and into our studio, but we quickly cleaned up the mess.

Our biggest problems were a large enough generator, gasoline, personnel, and cellular service. All local cell companies had damage to towers that would not allow us to use cell phones, and of course there was no telephone service for 3 weeks.

If we had not been able to beg for gasoline from listeners, we would have been off the air in less than 24 hours. And, that is not something you can store for use during an emergency. All I know is, we are still getting "Thank you's" from local people. They depended on us to be there for them, so we had to do what we had to do. I know our local officials have a new, and much greater, appreciation for their local radio station. They tell me that everyday. "What would we have done without WRJW? I think the people would have panicked!"

This incredible experience should point out the importance of hometown radio stations, and their needs during a crisis. If things had been any worse, I'm not sure we could have handled it. And, I know we would have done a better job if we had been able to go full power right away.

It might be a good idea for state Associations of Broadcasters to form a plan of aids in the way of sharing personnel during a crisis. Out of state police departments, fire departments, EMTs, Paramedics, and emergency personnel came in to help their respective departments, but, there was no experienced help for hometown radio stations. And, let's face it, the job requires training and/or experience. It would have been nice for large broadcast stations from out of town to send help.

Jackie, thank you for your help. Maybe you can help us all be more prepared if and when there is a "next time".

Sincerely,



M. Delores Wood, Manager
WRJW 1320 AM, Picayune, Ms

2072

Picayune's only radio station!