

WRITTEN STATEMENT

of

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on

Hurricane Katrina

**Before the
Committee on Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives**

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Ken Moran and I serve as the Director of the Federal Communications Commission's Office of Homeland Security. In that role, I am primarily responsible for coordinating the Commission's support of the Hurricane Katrina disaster relief efforts.

In my testimony today, I will describe some of the damage wrought by Hurricane Katrina to the communications industry and the Commission's efforts to assist consumers, the industries the agency regulates, and other Federal Agencies during this difficult crisis.

Hurricane Katrina caused catastrophic damage and massive flooding in areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The loss of life and damage to property is astounding, and our thoughts and prayers go out to those people affected by this disaster. As I am sure you are aware, most of the communications industry sustained tremendous damage to their facilities in the affected area, and the damage has had a significant impact. The damage to the communications infrastructure hampered the rescue operations of emergency responders. Relief efforts and survivors are still struggling with the effects of the hurricane. Survivors lack information about relief efforts. People displaced from their homes do not have the means to contact their loved ones to let them know they are safe. And of course, survivors remaining in the affected area lack a reliable means of contacting the authorities and getting help in lifethreatening situations.

STATUS OF COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

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 network outage reports filed in accordance with the Commission’s rules, and through data given to us voluntary by the industry, we understand that an extreme effort is 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 and wireless carriers have crews working to repair switching centers, customer lines, and cell towers. Satellite service providers have helped 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.

Even with these efforts, given the enormity of the disaster, many of the communications services in the affected areas remain down. Today, we understand that more than one million customer lines and over 20 switching centers remain out of service. Approximately 1700 DS-3 interoffice facilities remain down. Six public safety answering points remain out of service. Approximately thirty percent of cell sites are not operational. Fifty to 100 radio and television stations remain off the air. Many of the sites that are operational are dependent on back-up energy supplies.

COMMISSION ACTIONS

On August 30th, Chairman Martin established an internal Task Force consisting of senior executives and management from within the Commission. Chairman Martin directed the Task Force to coordinate the FCC's hurricane response efforts, which fall into two categories: (1) regulatory relief; and (2) industry outreach and coordination with other federal agencies. The Task Force has been working on these assignments continuously since August 30th, and the Commission was open throughout the Labor Day weekend to continue the work. To date, nearly 200 FCC employees have assisted in this effort.

Regulatory Relief

The Commission has taken a number of steps to facilitate the resumption of communications services in the affected areas 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 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 FCC has received at least 22 STA requests and 77 requests for temporary frequency assignments. The Commission also has received a number of requests for temporary waiver of its rules. The Commission has granted each of these requests within 4 hours of receipt of all necessary information from the requestor, except in instances requiring coordination with other government agencies. Even in those cases, requests have been granted within 24 hours. In addition, the

Commission has released several public notices and quickly adopted orders to provide temporary relief.

Examples of the many steps the Commission has taken to assist disaster relief efforts and affected providers are listed in the attached appendix.

Industry Outreach and Coordination with Other 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) pursuant to the procedures established in the National Response Plan. The Commission is continuously reaching out to communications companies serving the affected area – wireline and wireless network providers, broadcasters, cable providers, satellite providers – and to trade associations for these providers to assess the companies’ status and determine what they need to resume operations. These efforts include Commission staff contacting each of the approximately 160 broadcast stations in the affected region.

The FCC provides the critical information about resources that communications providers need to restore and maintain service in the affected area to FEMA and NCS, who are responsible for ensuring that priority needs are met. For instance, the Commission identified wireline central offices and radio and television broadcasters that could be operational if provided fuel to power on-site generators. The agency updates FEMA and NCS daily on evolving needs.

The Commission also is responsible for providing the National Coordinating Center (NCC) with information on communications companies’ operational status for incorporation into the government-wide situation reports. Again, the agency gathers and submits this data daily.

In addition, the FCC 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, Commission staff 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. Staff also worked with a wide range of providers – including those offering competitive facilities-based telecommunications, satellite, wireless, wireless internet access and WI FI services – to identify those providers capable of offering facilities and services that can assist those in the affected area.

Finally, the Commission 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.

CONCLUSION

FCC Chairman Kevin Martin, Commissioners Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein, along with the FCC staff, commend the industry and the tremendous efforts it has made to begin to repair the infrastructure and restore communications service to the Gulf Coast. These extraordinary efforts to restore communications services are being performed by employees of the communications industry – many of whom may be personally impacted by this tragedy.

The Commission is continuing to work with other Federal agencies and the communications industry to determine what additional actions can be taken to assist in the

disaster relief and restoration effort. More information about these efforts is – and will continue to be – available on the Commission’s web site: <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/katrina/>.

The Commission also will continue its important work in reaching out, and responding to, consumers affected by this tragedy. Since the hurricane struck, including over the Labor Day weekend, 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 agency will continue these and other efforts to address consumer concerns, in coordination with other government agencies, relief organizations, consumer groups and industry.

The damage wrought by Hurricane Katrina is tremendous and its effects will be felt for months and possibly years to come. The Commission stands ready to work with Congress, our colleagues at federal, state, and local agencies, and the American public to do whatever we can to help with the disaster relief and restoration efforts. I would be pleased to respond to your questions.

Appendix

Since Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the Commission has taken a number of steps to help the industry resume service and to assist the communications needs of disaster relief personnel and evacuees in shelters. Following are some examples of Commission actions:

- On September 2nd, the Commission granted STAs to operate ultra-wide band services “through-the-wall” imaging systems to locate survivors.
- On September 5th, the Commission temporarily authorized the Department of Defense to conduct ship-to-ship, ground, and air-to-ground operations in the affected area.
- Over the past week, the Commission granted STAs and temporary frequency authorizations to parties working to support relief efforts and to utilities working to restore phone and electric service in the affected area.
- Over the Labor Day weekend, the Commission granted a temporary waiver of its “slamming rules,” which require carriers to ensure subscribers are notified before their long distance service is switched. This temporary waiver will permit carriers to temporarily transfer customers to long distance carriers with working facilities while restoration efforts are under way.
- On September 2nd, the Commission acted upon the request of the American Red Cross and temporarily reassigned 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 non-governmental 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.
- Also on September 2nd, the Commission suspended its rules in order to permit noncommercial educational (NCE) radio and television stations in New Orleans to rebroadcast programming, including commercial matter, received from commercial broadcast stations. This special relief is designed to bring immediate life saving and other important program information to the residents of New Orleans in the most expeditious manner possible.
- Between September 2nd and September 4th, the Commission granted STAs to provide Internet connectivity to more than 200 shelters operated by the American Red Cross.
- On September 1st and 2nd, the Commission temporarily waived certain rules applicable to NCE television and radio stations, allowing those stations to air fundraising programming to aid disaster relief efforts.

- On September 5th, the Commission granted experimental authorizations to permit the use of 3 FM signals to broadcast emergency information to the approximately 24,000 evacuees in the Houston Astrodome.
- Over the Labor Day weekend, the Commission granted a waiver of its numbering rules that require carriers to return certain unused telephone numbers. This action will permit carriers in the affected area to retain telephone numbers that are not in use for longer than 90 days in order to allow consumers returning to the affected area continued use of their telephone numbers.
- On September 1st, the Commission waived its rules in order to permit wireline and wireless carriers to port telephone numbers geographically outside of rate centers during this period of service disruption. This action is intended to help consumers keep using their telephone numbers during the crisis, to the extent facilities are available.
- Also on September 1st, the Commission granted an equipment authorization for a new digital microwave radio system. One of the major wireless carriers will use this equipment to replace equipment in Baton Rouge and southern Louisiana that was destroyed by the hurricane.
- On September 2nd, the Commission granted a request from the 800 MHz Transition Administrator to move Louisiana from Wave 2, which begins relocation negotiations in October 2005, to Wave 3. This action enables public safety entities in Louisiana to focus on more immediate public safety needs.
- On September 1st, the Commission issued informal guidance to amateur radio operators that they have authority to make transmissions necessary to meet essential communication needs and facilitate relief actions, and that prior Commission approval is not required for such transmissions.