

BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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Statement of

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Entercom New Orleans

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Good Morning, I am Diane Newman, Operations Director of Entercom's Station WWL 870. - AM, New Orleans, LA. I want to thank the Commission for this opportunity to tell the story of the importance of local radio to our local communities, especially in times of a devastating crisis like Hurricane Katrina. Before I discuss what happened in New Orleans, please allow me to share how important I believe it is that I appear before the Commission today. David Tyree was one of the people I loved most—a dear friend and long-time host for WWL. He is being buried today in his hometown in Oklahoma after a long battle with cancer. David exemplified the heart and soul of WWL. I know that rather than grieve at his funeral, David would want me here today to tell the story of how his beloved WWL so valiantly served the New Orleans he loved.

WWL is a 50-kilowatt news talk AM station, licensed to New Orleans, LA. In addition to WWL, Entercom New Orleans operates four FM stations and one other AM station in the New Orleans market. All of these stations remained operational, as Hurricane Katrina raged through the city Sunday night and Monday; as levies broke from her fury; as New Orleans filled with

water. To conserve generator fuel we shut down two of the FM stations Tuesday and were forced to operate the stations remaining on the air at reduced power due to generator capacity and to conserve fuel. Knowing the threat that hurricanes posed to the City, Entercom New Orleans had developed and followed a detailed emergency preparedness plan that worked. Throughout the crisis our staff was committed to doing whatever was necessary to serve our community in this time of crisis. At one point on Monday during the storm, WWL's emergency generator shut down and could not be restarted remotely. Knowing that WWL was the lifeline to the community, Dave Cohen, our News Director, and Dominic Mitchum, one of our engineers, - who were stationed at the Jefferson Parish Emergency Operations Center where WWL maintained an emergency studio - drove several miles to the WWL transmitter site, which is outside the levy system, waded through a snake and alligator infested swamp to restart the generator and get WWL back on the air.

As Hurricane Katrina tore the city apart and the subsequent flooding unfolded, WWL and our sister Entercom stations became one of the few and at times possibly the only reliable means of communication throughout the City. Local authorities, including the Mayor of New Orleans and the President of Jefferson Parish, relied on WWL to get critical information out to their own staffs as well as to their citizenry. Mayor Nagin made his passionate plea for help during an interview on WWL.

After the 17th Street Canal broke and extreme flooding began on Tuesday, conditions deteriorated to a point where it became apparent that we would not be able to remain in our studio downtown next to the Superdome, even though we were on the fifth floor of an office

building. We began discussions with Clear Channel. We needed studios and they needed the news and information capabilities of WWL. Logic, necessity and the mutual respect of broadcasters resulted in an unprecedented cooperative arrangement that allowed Entercom to set up studio operation at Clear Channel's facilities in Baton Rouge and bring the signal into our stations in New Orleans via satellite. Our engineers, with local cooperation including police escorts were able to set up satellite-receive capability at the Jefferson Parish Emergency Operations Center where, as part of our emergency planning Entercom had existing microwave facilities to reach our transmitter sites. Louisiana Network let us use their satellite uplink. Clear Channel assisted in the programming and simulcast the programming on their two FM's that remained operational. United Radio Broadcasters of New Orleans was born. We gave permission to retransmit our signal to any radio station that asked. We believe that dozens of radio stations were carrying the WWL signal during the worst of the crisis, and many continue to do so now. In addition, the WWL programming was carried on short-wave station WHRI.

Meanwhile on the air, we were the stage...the platform...the lifeline for local officials, breaking news, live press conferences -....the voice of the voiceless...the voice of the authorities trying to reach them...the voice of family and friends worried about loved ones. We brought in additional news reporters from other markets as far away as Seattle, Buffalo, Boston and Cincinnati to help. The on-site emergency responders were regularly monitoring WWL. Ultimately, WWL became a form of a backup 911 system for New Orleans. In many ways Radio became a "first responder."

All of this was done by the extremely dedicated and brave group of people who placed the needs of the community above their own personal needs. Many of our radio family members lost everything they owned. Many didn't know the fate of their parents, brothers, sisters, friends. But, we did the work. We do the work. Local radio was an invaluable connection for listeners throughout Greater New Orleans, the Gulf South and cities across America. We are the touchstone for the community during the hurricane and the devastation that followed. We are the connection as the story continues to unfold. Our close working relationship with people like New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin; Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard; NOPD Chief Eddie Compass; Sheriff Harry Lee; Emergency Managers - Dr. Walter Maestri & Terry Ebert & Tab Troxler; St. Tammany Sheriff Jack Strain; St. Bernard Parish President Junior Rodriguez; Plaquemines Parish President Benny Roussell; Senators David Vitter and Mary Landrieu; Congressman Bobby Jindal and William Jefferson; and so many more - relationships developed through the years - proved invaluable during this - the worst natural disaster in the history of America. We - WWL and United Radio Broadcasters - believe our efforts helped save many lives.

As a compelling indication of the importance local officials place on WWL being in the heart of the community, the City of New Orleans has told us that they would do whatever it takes to expedite the return of WWL operations to its studios in downtown New Orleans. We are working on that return as I sit here today.

I am proud to be part of WWL and Entercom New Orleans. I am proud to be a broadcaster and I am proud to be a native of New Orleans. And, as a Hurricane Betsy survivor... I believe when

bad things happen - good things come from it. Now, as a Hurricane Katrina survivor, I believe when devastating things happen - extraordinary blessings will come from it. Although it will take extraordinary efforts, New Orleans will recover and we intend to do our part to aid in those efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I will be happy to answer any questions you have.