

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DLCA Requests Corrective Action Plan From AT&T As Cellphone Calls Continue To Drop At Various Locations In USVI

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Ernice Gilbert **July 21, 2017**



In May, Governor Kenneth Mapp said his administration [hosted](#) the vice president of AT&T, with the aim of compelling the wireless cellphone and internet services company to provide ubiquitous cellphone coverage in the territory. Following the meeting, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (D.L.C.A.) Commissioner, Devin Carrington, was charged with mapping all so-called “dead spots” in the territory, and has since then provided AT&T with a list of areas that are in need of attention.

But two months later, AT&T has not taken the necessary steps to fix the no service zones in the territory, forcing DLCA - which the department made known through a press release issued Thursday -- to request an assessment report and corrective action plan regarding dropped calls and dead zones on its network.

DLCA said it continues to receive numerous reports of dropped calls and dead zones throughout the three islands.

"AT&T is obligated to provide to the consumers of the Virgin Islands exactly what they advertised for sale, reliable cell phone coverage throughout the Virgin Islands," Mr. Carrington said. "Instead, consumers are paying huge sums of money to AT&T for what appears to be sub-standard service, and in some instances no service at all."

Mr. Mapp said AT&T's technical team members were in the territory during the week of May 10 to investigate all the no-service areas, to get them "functional and working, and to ensure that USVI customers receive the kind of service that U.S. mainland customers do. He said service providers like Sprint, Viya, "or anybody who has a license to provide cell service in the Virgin Islands" — would see similar fates. "You're either going to do it on the level you're required to do it on the U.S. mainland, or we're going to simply push back against you for not fulfilling your responsibilities to deliver service to the customers for what they're paying for," he said.

Mr. Mapp said he wanted to put cellphone service providers on notice that landline telephones are becoming more and more a thing of the past. "People are relying on their cellular devices, and we in the Virgin Islands are charged for service just like our counterparts on the U.S. mainland. But the quality of our service is just ridiculous... It's just not good," Mr. Mapp said. The governor spoke of certain parts on all three islands that cellphone service is nonexistent.

Yet it seems as if the governor's pressure has not produced the desired results, forcing the government arm responsible for taking action against AT&T to step in.

"As the DLCA commissioner, I have personally committed DLCA team members to collaborate with AT&T to address these issues," Mr. Carrington said. The department, in conjunction with the Virgin Islands Emergency Management Authority (VITEMA), provided AT&T with an extensive list of areas on all three islands where coverage is problematic and followed-up with written and telephonic contact. However, to date, AT&T has yet to propose a clear plan of action in response setting reasonable time lines to address the dropped calls and dead zones, DLCA charged. DLCA said it has, through formal notice, set time lines for action to be taken by AT&T to address network issues. The department did not reveal the timeline in its press release.

"DLCA recognizes that AT&T's wireless telephone systems rely on cell sites to transmit signal, and that occasionally some interference may occur. However, in far too many instances, large areas on all three islands experience continuous dropped calls or are dark areas where no service is available. This is especially critical as consumers increasingly depend on cellular phones as their primary or sole means of communication. Consumers who pay substantial amounts of hard earned money for cellphone service, deserve to receive the service that AT&T has advertised it can deliver. The DLCA intends to ensure that this is what consumers receive," Mr. Carrington said.

There was no mention in the release about Sprint, another major cellphone service provider here. As for VIYA, DLCA issued a separate press release (to be published on The Consortium later today), in which the department speaks about VIYA's cooperation and action to build a cellular phone service in the territory with optimum coverage. Secondary services such as H2O or Boost Mobile, rely on either AT&T or Sprint towers for signal.

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