

The Virgin Islands Consortium

AT&T USVI Says It's Prepared For Hurricane Irma; Response Equipment And Personnel On Standby

VIC News / **Published On September 05, 2017 09:45 AM /**

Staff **September 05, 2017**



AT&T said on Monday that it's ready for Hurricane Irma with response equipment and personnel on standby.

The storm, now a 150 mile-per-hour category 4 hurricane, is expected to impact the USVI late Tuesday and into Wednesday morning. AT&T, which has been making preparation for the storm, said its readiness efforts include topping off fuel generators, testing high-capacity back-up batteries at cell sites and protecting physical facilities against flooding. AT&T has also staged temporary cell sites and other equipment in strategic locations if needed. Its national reliability center is monitoring outages for quick action.

AT&T has also improved the network redundancy in storm-prone areas. It has installed more generators at critical cell towers and switching facilities, and moved electronics essential to network operations above expected flood levels.

"Customers rely on us, especially during major storms," said Ray Flores, regional vice president of AT&T Puerto Rico & USVI. "That's why we practice readiness drills and simulations throughout the year. We do all we can to have our networks prepared when severe weather strikes. We've worked for the past few days to position equipment and crews to respond to the storm. We're closely linked with USVI public officials in their storm response efforts. With a storm of this size, we may have some outages. But if service goes down, we'll do all we can to get it back up as fast as possible."

The AT&T National Disaster Recovery (NDR) program is one of the industry's largest and most advanced disaster response programs. It includes hundreds of technology recovery and support trailers that can be quickly deployed to respond to disasters. The NDR team works with local AT&T network personnel, regional emergency operations centers and local response centers to keep service going until permanent repairs are made.

Just AT&T prepared our networks and personnel, the company encouraged its customers to consider the following recommendations in the wake of the storm.

Customer Tips:

- **Keep your mobile phone battery charged.** In case of a power outage, have another way to charge your phone like an extra battery, car charger or device-charging accessory. Applicable sales tax holidays are a great time to stock up on cell phone accessories.
- **Keep your mobile devices dry.** The biggest threat to your device during a hurricane is water. Keep it safe from the elements by storing it in a baggie or some other type of protective covering, like an Otterbox phone cover.
- **Have a family communications plan.** Choose someone out of the area as a central contact. Make sure all family members know who to contact if they get separated. Most importantly, practice your emergency plan in advance.
- **Program all of your emergency contact numbers and e-mail addresses into your mobile phone.** Numbers should include the police department, fire station and hospital, as well as your family members.
- **Forward your home number to your mobile number in the event of an evacuation.** Call forwarding is based out of the telephone central office. This means you will get calls from your landline phone even if your local telephone service is disrupted. If the central office is not operational, services such as voicemail and call forwarding may be useful.
- **Track the storm and access weather information on your mobile device.** Many homes lose power during severe weather. You can stay up to speed as a DIRECTV customer, by streaming local weather channels using the DIRECTV application on your smartphone. If you subscribe to mobile DVR, you can also stream every channel directly to your phone.
- **Camera phones provide assistance.** If you have a camera phone, take, store and send photos and video clips of damage to your insurance company.
- **Use location-based technology.** Services like AT&T Navigator and AT&T [FamilyMap](#) can help you find evacuation routes or avoid traffic from downed trees or

power lines. They can also track a family member's wireless device if you get separated.

- **Limit social media activity.** Keep social media activity to a minimum during and after a storm to limit network congestion and allow for emergency communications to go through.

Business Tips:

- **Set up a call-forwarding service to a backup location.** Set up a single or multiple hotline number(s) for employees, their families, customers and partners so they all know about the business situation and emergency plan.
- **Back up data to the Cloud.** Routinely back up files to an off-site location. Tools like AT&T Enterprise Recovery Services are cost-efficient and help ensure your important data is there when you need it.
- **Outline detailed plans for evacuation and shelter-in-place.** Practice these plans (employee training, etc.). Establish a backup location for your business and meeting place for all employees.
- **Assemble a crisis-management team. Coordinate efforts with neighboring businesses and building management.** Disasters that affect your suppliers also affect your business. Outline a plan for supply chain continuity for business needs.
- **Consider a back-up cellular network.** Services like AT&T Remote Mobility Zone protect critical communications for businesses. If a disaster disables primary communications networks, the back-up cellular network can help you stay connected.

Keeping the lines open for emergencies

During evacuations, the storm event and its aftermath, network resources will likely be taxed. To help ensure that emergency personnel have open lines, keep these tips in mind:

Text messaging. During an emergency situation, text messages may go through more quickly than voice calls because they require fewer network resources. All of AT&T's wireless devices are text messaging capable. Depending on your text or data plan, additional charges may apply.

- **Be prepared for high call volume.** During an emergency, many people are trying to use their phones at the same time. The increased calling volume may create network congestion, leading to "fast busy" signals on your wireless phone or a slow dial tone on your landline phone. If this happens, hang up, wait several seconds and then try the call again. This allows your original call data to clear the network before you try again.
- **Keep non-emergency calls to a minimum,** and limit your calls to the most important ones. If there is severe weather, chances are many people will be attempting to place calls to loved ones, friends and business associates.

Additional information and tips for disaster preparedness can be found at www.att.com/vitalconnections.