

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Editorial | Sprint Should Be Abandoned By All Of Its Customers In The U.S. Virgin Islands

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While it's never prudent to have one company dominate any space because monopolies are never good, alas, AT&T will have to do it for now, because Sprint, which has operated in the U.S. Virgin Islands as long as anyone can remember, raking in, by now, millions in revenues from its local customers, has shown that it cares nothing about the service it provides here, and should be abandoned en masse by everyone who still holds a Sprint account.

There is no excuse that the company could state verbally or otherwise that would forgive the way it has treated Virgin Islanders during and after the two storms that ravaged through all four islands. The company's service went missing right after Hurricane Irma

and has yet to adequately return. And it would be understandable if this only occurred in the St. Thomas-St. John District, as those islands were left in a ruinous state by the storm. But service also went dark on St. Croix -- which was barely touched by Irma -- even as AT&T, Sprint's closest competitor in the territory, held up on St. Croix.

AT&T, like almost all other communication firms operating in the St. Thomas-St. John District, went dark after the passage of Irma. And when Maria struck St. Croix, AT&T's service became intermittent, with only a few locations on the island receiving cellular connection. But the company sprung into action by shipping in a barge of microwaves and other equipment, as well as technicians to restore its service. Joe York, president of AT&T Florida, Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands, [made contact with Governor Kenneth Mapp](#) to give updates on the firm's progress.

Yet as of late last week, no representative of Sprint had directly communicated with the governor to give updates on Sprint's restoration efforts, if there was any occurring. Mr. Mapp did say that he was left a note, but it had nothing noteworthy to share.

Making matters worse, Sprint blatantly showed that it could have responded with haste in restoring service to the U.S. Virgin Islands following the storms, as it quickly mobilized an army of technicians and barges of equipment to Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria.

Referring to Puerto Rico in a post published on its website on Oct. 5, Sprint wrote, "Our crews continue to work tirelessly on network restoration efforts across the Island. To aid those efforts, new shipments of supplies arrived today, including much needed fuel, and will continue to arrive tomorrow and through the weekend. Generators that arrived this week are being deployed as quickly as possible, and dozens more will arrive over the weekend and next week. Additionally, new Sprint and Boost Mobile stores have opened to serve as charging stations resulting in 29 total locations (new additions in red).

In the same post, the company also said, "Shipments of equipment and supplies, including fuel, needed for network restoration continue to arrive by air and cargo ship regularly. While we continue our work, our biggest challenges remain backhaul and lack of power. We are relying on a blended workforce for restoration efforts that includes Sprint personnel from both Puerto Rico and teams flown in from the U.S. that work side-by-side with local crews. A new Sprint crew from the mainland just arrived yesterday." The post also includes multiple lists where Sprint customers could charge their phones.

Sprint has shown no such urgency for the USVI; a reality that patently speaks to the company's disregard for the well-being of its Virgin Islands customers.

In this day and age, nothing is more important than the ability to communicate. During natural disasters, communicating -- especially with loved ones -- becomes an absolute necessity, not only to check on their status, but also to provide, as is oftentimes the case, much-needed relief supplies, and to coordinate ways to remove them from affected areas. Sprint's loyal USVI customers were robbed of that chance then, and are being sidelined by the company even today, as service -- after being down for what seemed like a lifetime -- is now an unreliable patchwork, with no Internet access.

Sprint, though, still wants its money, eliciting the chagrin of USVI residents.

The company has become the laughing stock of the Virgin Islands, and rightly so. Wisely, some of its most loyal customers have been visiting its stores to part ways, unable to bear the neglect. Others have simply called to say goodbye.

Two days ago, a St. Croix resident and local DJ [joked on social media](#), "Which do you guys think will come back first... Sprint or WAPA?" The joke being that Sprint should definitely be up first as it will be months before the territory is fully restored with power.

[View the original embedded media](#)

At this point, though, who knows.

V.I. Consortium's Editorial Board.

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