

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Viya Receives Over 9,000 Mobile Internet Devices For St. Croix Customers; Company Aims For 100 Percent Restoration By March 2018

Technology / **Published On December 06, 2017 01:25 PM /**

Staff **December 06, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- During a Tuesday press event to unveil its mobile hotspot devices set to begin distribution on Monday, Viya -- the most established communications firm in the U.S. Virgin Islands with over 25,000 Internet service customers before Hurricanes Irma and Maria -- said that it's aiming for 75 percent restoration by February 2018, and 100 percent by the end of March 2018.

Viya's internet cables were on poles belonging to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority when the hurricanes struck, and the company has suffered huge losses as

most of its customers are still without its multi-prong services package: cable TV, high-speed Internet service, and its landline telephone offering. The company's wireless network, which was recently launched with 4G LTE, is up and running, and tests by The Consortium have yielded extremely positive results -- above competitors AT&T and Sprint (a full review of the network is in the works).

Even so, customers have left the company in great numbers because of the length of time it is taking to restore service. Viya CEO Alvaro Pilar said during the press conference, held at the firm's customer experience center on St. Croix, that he understood people's frustration, but said he was determined to regain their business as the restoration progressed because of what he said was Viya's superior offering.

Viya has imported dozens of workers to help with the restoration: over 25 in the St. Thomas-St. John district and more than 30 on St. Croix. But even with the additional help, the restoration work will take time, with full restoration not projected until March 2018. To help keep customers stay loyal, the company ordered 9,000 MiFi devices and is utilizing a lottery system to distribute them (signup [here](#)).

The devices, however, are not free. There are two plans: The first costs \$50 and offers 6 megabits per second (Mbps) and up, according to Viya. The company did not clarify whether the 6Mbps speed is realized for both upload and download. The second plan costs \$60 and offers 12Mbps and up, again with no clarity on whether these speeds are equal for uploading and downloading content.

The \$50 plan comes with a limit of 3 gigabits of data use per day, after which the speed slows considerably to 256 kilobits per second (Kbps). The maximum monthly available gigabits per month for the \$50 plan is 20.

For the \$60 plan, the speed slows to 256 Kbps after 5 gigabits of use per day. The monthly available gigabits per month for this plan is 30, according to Viya.

Compared to the AT&T mobile hotspot devices, Viya's offering is extremely attractive. For example, AT&T offers 8 gigabits per month for \$75. You can use as much data as you please, and consume your entire data in a day. If you run out of data in the AT&T plan, you can purchase more — \$10 for 2 gigabits — until the next renewal date of your plan.

Mr. Alvaro is betting that the company will not only regain its customers but win additional ones once residents start to see the benefits of using its network. "We have the service, we have the quality, we have the responsiveness -- we're going to be here," he said. Mr. Alvaro mentioned how the company had gone from 13,000 high-speed Internet users to 25,000, touting the growth as a result of the company's first-rate service. "We almost doubled; how did we do that? We started installing faster... we started giving double the speed for the same price, and people loved it," he said. Mr. Alvaro took a dig at competitors he said lock customers into lengthy contracts, while Viya has no such stipulation. "With us you can leave whenever you want to. Why? Because my quality, my service, is going to be my signature."

Feature Image: Viya CEO Alvaro Pilar holds up a MiFi devices. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

