

The Virgin Islands Consortium

AT&T Says Its Prepared to Keep Communities Connected During Hurricane Season

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AT&T said on Wednesday that is prepared to keep its customers and [FirstNet](#) subscribers connected during the 2019 hurricane season. Touting its nearly 30 years of experience responding to large-scale events, the communications behemoth said it has proven time and time again that it's ready and prepared to restore and maintain service if disaster strikes.

Following the disastrous storms of 2017, which devastated the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and a number of other Caribbean islands, at least on St. Croix, AT&T cellphone service held up in some areas, serving as a critical lifeline.

For this year's hurricane season, AT&T said it's prepared with a fleet of equipment that can be quickly deployed before, during and after any storm. Plus, public safety agencies on FirstNet – the only dedicated communications network platform purpose-built for first responders – also have 24/7 access to a nationwide fleet of dedicated deployable network assets, helping them connect to the critical information they need, AT&T said.

"Staying connected during severe weather events is critical," said Scott Mair, president of Operations, AT&T Technology & Operations. "In the last few years alone, we have responded to countless major storms and other natural disasters. Our people are experienced, constantly perfecting the process and are ready to respond at a moment's notice."

How AT&T prepare:

- Boosting network capacity to accommodate increased call volume.
- Testing the high-capacity backup batteries located at cell sites.
- Topping off and maintaining existing fixed generators with fuel at cell sites and switching facilities.
- Staging additional generators in safe locations for immediate deployment once a storm has passed.

Response equipment we use in the wake of an event:

- Mobile cell sites and mobile command centers, like Cell on Wheels (COWs) and Cell on Light Trucks (COLTs)
- Emergency Communications Vehicles (ECVs)
- Flying Cell on Wings (Flying COWs)
- Drones
- A self-sufficient base camp: It's complete with sleeping tents, bathrooms, kitchen, laundry facilities, an on-site nurse and meals ready to eat (MREs).
- Hazmat equipment and supplies.
- Technology and support trailers to provide infrastructure support and mobile heating ventilation and air conditioning.
- Internal and external resources for initial assessment and recovery efforts.

AT&T said its team has spent more than 145,000 hours in the field over the last 25 years. And AT&T has invested more than \$650 million in its Network Disaster Recovery program (NDR), making it one of the nation's largest and most advanced.

Prioritizing first responder communications

"We know how critical communications are to rescue and recovery efforts. That's why we partnered with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government – to deliver the FirstNet communications platform to public safety," AT&T said.

FirstNet gives first responders the unthrottled connectivity they need, no matter the emergency:

- **Priority & Preemption:** In emergencies and disasters, commercial networks can quickly become congested. That's why FirstNet is the only nationwide platform that

gives first responders *always-on* priority and preemption. It puts them at the front of the “communications line,” prioritizing their access to the network.

- **Greater Command & Control:** Public safety agencies have access to 75 mobile cell sites that link to FirstNet via satellite and do not rely on commercial power availability. And, to give first responders greater command and control of their network, the FirstNet Response Operations Program aligns with the [National Incident Management System](#) to better guide the deployment of these assets.
- **Enhanced Coverage and Capacity:** AT&T has also deployed FirstNet Band 14 spectrum across 600+ markets nationwide. Band 14 is high-quality spectrum provided by the FirstNet Authority with special capabilities just for public safety. During an emergency, this band can be cleared and locked just for FirstNet subscribers. That means only those on FirstNet will be able to access that spectrum, further elevating their connected experience and emergency response. When not in use by FirstNet subscribers, AT&T customers can also enjoy Band 14's added coverage and capacity.

To learn more about the value FirstNet is bringing to public safety, check out [FirstNet.com](https://www.firstnet.com).