



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC: IMPORTANT TIPS TO COMMUNICATE DURING EMERGENCIES FOR RESIDENTS PREPARING FOR HURRICANE IRENE

FCC closely monitoring path of Hurricane Irene, coordinating with FEMA and other federal partners for emergency preparation and response

Washington, D.C. – With Hurricane Irene threatening residents along the Eastern United States, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski and Rt. Admiral Jamie Barnett (Chief, FCC Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau) held a briefing today to update the public about emergency preparations. In addition, the FCC released important tips for consumers in affected areas to ensure that people can communicate with family, friends and loved-ones during an emergency or disaster.

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said, “As Hurricane Irene makes landfall, we are continuing to monitor the situation very closely. We have deployed our Emergency Response Team and our 24-Hour Ops Center in an effort to protect people’s ability to communicate, we are in close communication with wireless and wireline carriers as they implement hurricane preparations, such as pre-staging emergency equipment and repair teams. In addition, at our request, the carriers have activated DIRS (Disaster Information Reporting System) for affected areas in order to monitor critical outages reported by carriers on wireless, wireline and other communications systems.

“Working in close collaboration with FEMA, the FCC has deployed four Roll Call units to survey police, fire and emergency medical communications systems as well as television and radio stations along the entire eastern coastline. These Roll Call units will help first responders and carrier repair teams with fast information about what wireless communications are up or down in their area. As the storm progresses, these Roll Call units will analyze the areas hardest hit and immediately be able to communicate important data to FEMA about system damage in an effort to restore service as quickly as possible.

“In addition, our 24-hour Ops Center is coordinating requests for emergency use of special frequencies for first responders.

“During emergencies like this, communications networks can become weakened or compromised. I encourage everyone to review the tips from the FCC’s Public Safety Bureau on

communicating during emergencies.

“The public’s safety during natural disasters and other emergencies is among our top priorities. We will continue to work closely with FEMA and other federal partners to track the storm and provide updates as necessary. We also continue to work with our federal and state partners on key steps – such as building an interoperable mobile broadband public safety network; launching PLAN nationwide, which would provide a “fast-track” for emergency alerts around network congestion; and accelerating the move to Next Gen 911 -- to ensure that our emergency communications systems meet the needs of 21st century Americans.”

FCC: TIPS FOR HOW TO COMMUNICATE DURING AN EMERGENCY

1. Limit non-emergency phone calls. This will minimize network congestion, free up "space" on the network for emergency communications and conserve battery power if you are using a wireless phone;
2. Keep all phone calls brief. If you need to use a phone, try to use it only to convey vital information to emergency personnel and/or family;
3. For non-emergency calls, try text messaging, also known as short messaging service (SMS) when using your wireless phone. In many cases text messages will go through when your call may not. It will also help free up more "space" for emergency communications on the telephone network;
4. If possible try a variety of communications services if you are unsuccessful in getting through with one. For example, if you are unsuccessful in getting through on your wireless phone, try a messaging capability like text messaging or email. Alternatively, try a landline phone if one is available. This will help spread the communications demand over multiple networks and should reduce overall congestion;
5. Wait 10 seconds before redialing a call. On many wireless handsets, to re-dial a number, you simply push "send" after you've ended a call to redial the previous number. If you do this too quickly, the data from the handset to the cell sites do not have enough time to clear before you've resent the same data. This contributes to a clogged network;
6. Have charged batteries and car-charger adapters available for backup power for your wireless phone;
7. Maintain a list of emergency phone numbers in your phone;
8. If in your vehicle, try to place calls while your vehicle is stationary;
9. Have a family communications plan in place. Designate someone out of the area as a central contact, and make certain all family members know who to contact if they become separated;

10. If you have Call Forwarding on your home number, forward your home number to your wireless number in the event of an evacuation. That way you will get incoming calls from your landline phone;

11. After the storm has passed, if you lose power in your home, try using your car to charge cell phones or listen to news alerts on the car radio. But be careful – don't try to reach your car if it is not safe to do so, and remain vigilant about carbon monoxide emissions from your car if it is a closed space, such as a garage.

12. Tune-in to broadcast and radio news for important news alerts.

More information on emergency communications during Hurricane Irene from the FCC can be found at www.fcc.gov. Residents can also find more information at www.ready.gov, <http://www.redcross.org/en/irene> or www.fema.gov.

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