

**Written Statement of Steve Largent**  
**President and CEO of CTIA-The Wireless Association**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**  
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Good Afternoon Chairman Martin, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps and Adelstein. Thank you for the opportunity to share the wireless industry's efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This was by all accounts and measurements a catastrophic storm and I want to express my heartfelt sorrow to all those who are affected.

Katrina delivered a knock-out punch to the region that brought with it significant challenges for the wireless industry. Not only were more than a thousand cell sites and multiple switches throughout the region rendered inoperable, but the hurricane and ensuing flood terminated all landline service and access to power in some of the hardest hit regions, two key elements in the delivery of wireless service. Additionally, concerns regarding access to food, water and fuel, as well as general concerns about safety, all were present.

In spite of these obstacles, the industry has done a tremendous job in the days and weeks since the storm. As is standard practice, carriers began their around-the-clock effort to ensure service is maintained in the region many hours before Katrina hit land in the Gulf. By marshalling assets, positioning key personnel and procuring critical materials, carriers embarked on a process that has been successfully followed many times in the recent past.

As the storm weakened over land, carriers began first to focus on their employees. With thousands of workers in the path and wake of Katrina, the most immediate priority - like any company serving the region - was to confirm that their employees were safe. Companies moved quickly to track down missing employees, and where possible, provide whatever level of comfort was available. Unfortunately, many of our employees have simply lost everything. As you can imagine, our members are fully committed to working with those employees who have been most impacted by the storm.

The critical task of ensuring our employees' well being marked just the beginning of wireless carriers' response to Hurricane Katrina. Simultaneous with that effort, carriers immediately began working with federal, state and local officials to assist in rescue and recovery efforts.

In addition to distributing thousands of wireless phones and providing priority access to public safety personnel, wireless companies provided emergency communications trailers, generators, and other equipment to public safety officials and emergency first responders on the ground. Additionally, wireless industry personnel coordinated daily with the various levels and jurisdictions of government to match public sector requests with industry resources.

Next, the industry moved toward restoration. Simply put, the industry's goal has been to ensure that reliable telecommunications services are available to people from the Gulf Coast region as soon as possible, so they can begin the difficult process of putting their lives back together. It gives me a great sense of pride to sit before you this morning as a representative of the wireless industry to share with you what we are doing to achieve this goal. I say this because I believe our members' response to this devastating natural disaster has been nothing short of extraordinary.

I particularly want to note the selflessness and dedication of technicians and other telecommunications carrier employees -- many of whom have been personally impacted by this Hurricane. I just can't get over the many stories conveyed to me about employees who have lost literally everything, but are still showing up to work everyday and working around the clock to get service restored.

Despite the challenges, we have now been able to restore wireless service to much of the affected region, while also providing evacuees throughout the country with temporary telecommunications capabilities. Carriers have established emergency communications centers throughout the region where customers can send text messages and make long-distance calls to loved ones, free of charge. Many carriers also are providing relief agencies free wireless broadband connections to help reunite displaced families.

Across the industry, carriers suspended all collection efforts for affected subscribers and are providing free battery charging, calling, and technical support to help those without power and phone service at company-owned retail stores and other locations across Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

This effort has been enhanced by carriers agreeing to work together to bring service back to the region. Spectrum sharing, roaming arrangements, and sharing fuel, trucks, and security are some examples of what the industry did to help get the area back on its feet.

As an industry, we have never seen an event like this, but we must nonetheless be ready for the next Hurricane Katrina. We are fully committed to preparing for these circumstances. We recognize that wireless telecommunications services are vital in emergency situations and look forward to continue working with you and the public safety and first responder communities going forward.

In closing, our prayers go out to those impacted by this tragedy and we in the wireless industry will do everything within our power to fully restore service to people in the region as quickly and as effectively as possible.