

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Hurricane Sandy: MSOs Going with the Wind

Hurricane Sandy, moving north Monday and gaining strength, continued to threaten the most populated areas, many of which are served by major cable MSOs. In addition to informing subs through dedicated channels, company websites, email alerts and social media, video distributors continued to prepare. **DirectTV** has a dedicated 24/7 "Hurricane Sandy Information" channel, providing live broadcasts from local stations in markets affected by the hurricane to subs nationwide. In NYC, subways, schools and NYSE (the 1st unscheduled market shutdown since Sept '01) were closed Mon and Tues as Sandy's projected path put NYC and Long Island in the danger zone for a huge surge of seawater. **Time Warner Cable's** crews are "spread across #NYC to respond to any network issue..." the op said on **Twitter**. However, crews may not be able to access a repair site because of downed electrical wires or other unsafe conditions. As a result, subs' electricity ifs often restored before their TWC services, said *Jeff Simmermon*, director, digital communication on a blog post. **Comcast** proactively called customers over the weekend with a recorded message, warning them to avoid downed wires and encouraging them to use text alerts for info about outages (www.comcast.com/alerts). "Comcast is tracking and preparing for Hurricane Sandy so we can best support our customers," the call said. The op also emailed subs to warn of potential disruptions. After the storm, "our broadband network will alert us to the areas affected by a system outage. It's possible and quite likely that during hurricane recovery, not all services will be restored at the same time and there are times when you will need to report service interruptions," Comcast said. Parts of NJ and Long Island, where **Cablevision** and **Verizon** operate, already saw flooding Mon. "Cablevision is prepared for Hurricane Sandy, and will provide updated information to our customers at Optimum.net. In the event of storm-related impacts, we will work as quickly as possible to assess damage and complete any necessary repairs to our own facilities and in cooperation with local utilities," a spokesman said. **Verizon** emailed its **FIOS** subs Sun with info on its preparation. FiOS customers also received an on-screen alert about Sandy. The telco has suspended most non-emergency activity in the East, such as non-essential construction projects, to focus resources on serving subs for the duration of the storm. Despite preparations, the telco noted that its technicians may have to wait for approval from "local power companies, first-responders or law enforcement



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before beginning restoration work.” The hurricane compelled TWC to reschedule its 3Q earnings conference call to Nov 5. Several other major MSOs had scheduled earnings calls this and next week. New England and VA, where Cox operates, are also in the path of the storm. The op has implemented its Business Continuity Plan, which guides the company during emergency situations. Overbuilder **WOW!**, which has operations in OH, IN and IL, warned its customers that the hurricane may affect programmers with facilities in the Northeast. While much of DC was closed Mon, the US Supreme Court was open for business and hearing a case of interest to the cable industry. SCOTUS listened to oral arguments on whether copyrighted works made and purchased abroad can be bought and sold in the US without the copyright owner’s permission. The high court is taking a weather day Tues, rescheduling those arguments for Thurs. **FCC** commish *Ajit Pai* tweeted to remind the public to check out preparedness tips by **FEMA** and state emergency management agencies. The FCC released a tip sheet on communicating during national disasters.

Dealpalooza: Time Warner Cable Sports Net and Deportes signed Charter, Verizon FiOS and AT&T U-Verse to deals in Southern CA ahead of Wed’s Lakers game. Now all eyes turn to DirecTV and Cox. Charter was the 1st to announce a deal Fri evening, with Verizon and AT&T quickly following. AT&T will launch TWC SportsNet Tues on in the U100 package. Deportes is in the U300 or U-Latino packages. Time Warner Cable SportsNet will be available on FiOS TV channel 78 in SD and on channel 578 in HD. Time Warner Cable Deportes will be available on channel 79 in SD. In addition, programming will be available to FiOS TV customers online and on mobile devices including smartphones and tablets in the future. Charter said it planned to launch the nets in SD and HD on or before Wed. “Charter is committed to bring programming to our customers that mirror their interests,” said *Allan Singer*, Charter’s svp, programming. TWC SportsNet also has deals with **Bright House** and obviously TWC.

Soccer: It’s official. With **Fox** and **ESPN** out of the running, **NBCU** picked up the exclusive US rights to the English Premier League (*Cfax*, 10/29). The multi-year agreement starting with the ’13-’14 season provides NBCU with content for 10 months of the year across cable, broadcast and digital platforms. Specifically, **NBC**, **NBC Sports Net**, **NBCSports.com**, will air live Premiere League coverage, as well as **Telemundo** and **mun2** for Spanish-language coverage. Additional NBCU platforms and nets will “occasionally” be scheduled to air matches, while NBC Sports Live Extra, the TVE app, will allow live streaming across platforms. In addition, the NBC Sports Group will produce programming around its live-event coverage, including pre- and post-match shows and weekly wrap-ups. It’s also working on a package to ensure the avid fans can access to every match.

Retrans: Cablevision had complained it didn’t want all of **Tribune’s** stations, but in the end it struck a deal that included **CW** as well as **MyNetwork** affiliates. Fri evening **Fox CT** returned to Cablevision, with some 50K customers without the station since Aug 25. The CW and MyNetwork stations went dark Aug 17. “We sincerely appreciate the patience of our customers as we worked to reach an agreement that is consistent with our focus on minimizing the impact of rising programming costs on cable rates,” Cablevision said. Fox returned before the World Series concluded and as the East Coast braced for Hurricane Sandy. “We thank our viewers for their loyalty and continued support and we’re looking forward to bringing them the top quality local and national programming they expect, including award-winning news, political coverage, traffic, weather and live sports, including NFL Football and the World Series,” Tribune said.

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— *Italia Comisso, Executive Vice President, Programming and Human Resources, Mediacom Communications Corporation*

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