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What the Industry Reads First

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Hurricane Watch: Bracing for First Big Hurricane to Make US Landfall in 12 Years

There was plenty of concern Friday as Hurricane Harvey grew stronger and Texas' governor ordered evacuations. At press time, the storm had been upgraded to a life-threatening Category 3. Ahead of impact, **Comcast** opened up its Xfinity WiFi hotspots throughout the Greater Houston area to everyone, including non-subscribers. Non-customers will be able to renew their complimentary sessions every two hours through Wednesday. **Weather Channel** had 10 crews spread across Texas and Louisiana, ready to cover the first major hurricane to make landfall in the US in 12 years—the last being Wilma in October 2005 (Katrina was in August of the same year, leaving more than 1800 dead). Live coverage in Texas includes *Jim Cantore* in the Corpus Christi area, *Mike Bettes* in the Victoria area and *Jen Carfagno* in Houston. They won't be alone, with the major cable and broadcast newsmen sending reporters to the Gulf, including **Fox News'** "Fox & Friends" co-host *Rob Schmitt*. His show will begin an hour early Saturday at 5am ET. **Charter**, which operates systems in Corpus Christi, was going through its usual bad weather prep Friday. Additional line crews throughout its footprint are placed on standby should they be needed. Similarly, Comcast had crews on standby should the storm damage network and operations. In the meantime, it was business as usual Friday for the MSO Friday, but a spokesperson said the company was keeping close tabs on the situation and would make determinations based on weather conditions. "The safety and well-being of our employees is a top priority," he said. **AT&T** started closing some of its stores Friday, including locations in Galveston and Corpus Christi. To help customers prepare for the storm, AT&T is discounting cell phone batteries 20% at local retail stores in affected areas and it has installed more generators at cell towers and switching facilities. Comcast's mobile offering, **Comcast Wireless**, is also available in the region, provided through its MVNO with **Verizon**. Verizon said it has made network enhancements in Texas since last year's storm season, including adding capacity to hundreds of cell sites, fortifying coverage along evacuation routes and expanding 4G LTE service across the state. **Grande Communications** launched a storm update page for customers, giving constant updates from the **National Weather Service** and offering tips on weather warnings, including flooding. As part of its public-private partnership to deliver **FirstNet's** nationwide public safety broadband network, AT&T has increased its Network Disaster Recovery fleet with new deployable to support first responders. It has more than 700 pieces of



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equipment, including Cell on Wheels, trailers and generators. The **FCC** has activated its Disaster Information Reporting System, deployed personnel to Texas, and is providing emergency response officials and licensees with emergency contact information. "We are working in close coordination with the Department of Homeland Security and state and local partners to prepare for the impacts of the storm," FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* said in a statement Friday afternoon. Additionally, the FCC has launched www.fcc.gov/harvey with resources for those in the storm's path.

Across the Universe: There are 119.6mln TV homes in the US for the 2017-18 TV season, according to **Nielsen's** latest National Television Household Universe Estimates. That represents a 1% increase from this time last year, when the measurement company estimated there were 118.4mln TV homes. The number of P2+ viewers in US TV households this year is about 304.5mln, which marks a 0.9% bump from last year. Nielsen also pointed to increases in US Hispanic, black and Asian households due to perceived increases in population growth and TV penetration. Nielsen also said 96.5% of US homes are receiving TV signals of some kind (broadcast, cable, DBS, telco or via broadband) to a TV set, an increase of 0.5% from last year's estimate. Nielsen uses US census data, combined with info from the national TV panel, to derive its Universe Estimates in early May. The company released the data Friday in advance of the upcoming TV season.

Outdoor Living: **DISH** Network will offer customers, regardless of programming package, a free trial of **Outdoor Channel** beginning Thursday. The preview runs through Oct 3. The net is regularly available to DISH subs as part of its Outdoor Pack, America's Top 200, America's Top 250 and Smart Pack.

Tale of the Tape: **Showtime** is distributing Saturday (8/26) evening's PPV mega-fight between *Floyd Mayweather* and *Conor McGregor*. In addition to making the \$100 telecast available through MVPDs, **PlayStation** consoles, **Sling TV** and **UFC's** OTT platform, it is offering the fight directly to consumers for the first time through both in-browser streaming and an app. The fight could match or eclipse the record of 4.4mln PPV buys for a single event, set by Mayweather's 2015 fight against *Manny Pacquiao*. -- Showtime is putting an emphasis on digital content around the fight, debuting exclusive video on **Snapchat** and **Twitter**, as well as enlisting several well-known artists. The premium net is also offering live streams of pre- and post-fight press conferences and weigh-ins on **Facebook Live**, **YouTube** and **Twitter**.

Local Flavor: **PlayStation Vue** added 11 local broadcast stations to its live TV service this week. The virtual MVPD added eight **ABC** stations Tuesday in Baltimore, Indianapolis, KC, Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, San Antonio and San Diego. On Wednesday, PS Vue added **NBC** stations in Cincinnati and New Orleans, as well as a Nashville **CBS** affiliate. The new additions bring PS Vue's local count to 194 stations.

Diversity Week: Veteran journalist *John Quiñones* will serve as the opening keynote speaker at the 31st annual **NAMIC** Conference. The event is scheduled to be held at the New York Marriott Marquis on Sept 26-27 as part of cable's Diversity Week. **WICT's** Touchstones event, honoring its Women of the Year and Women to Watch, will feature a keynote from actress, producer and director *Trudie Styler* (**IFC Films'** "Freak Show"), Sept 25. **IFC Films & Sundance Selects** co-pres *Lisa Schwartz* is the luncheon's honorary chair. And don't forget to wake up early the next morning for **Cablefax** and **NAMIC's** breakfast recognizing **Cablefax: The Magazine's** Most Influential Minorities in Cable (Sept 26, 7:30am). **Altice USA** chmn/CEO *Dexter Goei* will be the featured guest.

Programming: **Fusion TV** will premiere an hour-long documentary titled "Debt Trap" on Sept 10 at 9pm ET. Part of the net's "The Naked Truth" film series, "Debt Trap" explores the state of the US student loan system and the impact of mountainous debt on recent college grads. It includes interviews with students, as well as Sen. *Elizabeth Warren* (D-MA) and Washington attorney general *Bob Ferguson*. -- **Starz** has acquired several documentaries that it will premiere on Monday nights this fall, beginning with environmental feature "The Age of Consequences" on Sept 18 at 9pm ET/PT. The premium net has a total of five new documentaries slated for the remainder of 2017 and is holding two more for 2018. -- **VH1** will debut another installment in its "Love & Hip Hop" franchise based in Miami this January. The unscripted series will delve into Miami's Latin culture. Previous spinoffs have been based in New York, Hollywood and Atlanta.

Honors: **The US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** is honoring **Comcast** executive director for external affairs *Jacquelyn Puente* with the Corporate Advocate of the Year Award at its 2017 National Convention in October. The annual award recognizes a corporate executive committed to championing the interests of American small business and Hispanic business enterprise.