

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Robust Response: ISPs Report Strong Interest in Student, Low-Income Broadband

ISPs have responded to the nation's COVID-19 crisis by finding ways to get more low-income households connected to the internet, and there are early signs that people are taking them up on offers of free connectivity. In a message to Charter employees Friday, management said the company has nearly double its normal call volume, with much of it related to Spectrum's commitment for free broadband access for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not already have Spectrum internet. "Installation activity by field technicians—typically averaging 12,000 truck rolls per day—has increased significantly in recent days resulting from response to our 60-day free internet commitment for customers with students," Charter said. Last Monday, South Carolina-based operator Comporium announced free installation and 60 days of broadband to any home with a student that currently didn't have service. "We knew it was the right thing to do, but we really had no idea what the response would be," evp, COO Matt Dosch told CFX. "The response from our educational partners [six local school districts] was swift and very positive. They helped us get the word out, and last week we saw more than four times as many new service orders as we normally see in a week. About half of that increase was made up of the free internet offers." Comporium said it's also seen almost twice as many speed upgrade orders as it normally sees in a week. Other ISPs said they too are seeing strong response to free broadband offerings. "We've had significant increases in applications and orders for this service and are working to install as fast as possible to get as many students connected," a Cox spokesperson said. Comcast reported similar interest. "We've also been doing outreach to schools and school districts, veteran-serving organizations, and partners that work with seniors to make sure as many people as possible know that the 60 days free offer and speed increase is out there. It's still early, so we don't have any numbers to share, but we're pleased with the response," a Comcast rep said. NCTA pres/CEO Michael Powell said that it's still too early to have data on the take rates, but it's something he'll be polling member companies on. One issue that may hinder families from signing up is a lack of devices. "We can bring a pipe, but there has to be a computer. A lot of families that device isn't there or it's more expensive than the cost of the access service," Powell said. "I know a lot of these programs, like [Comcast's] Internet Essentials, do work with partners to try and provide affordable computers and equipment. I know a lot of schools have tried to send kids home with iPads and such. That really has always been the

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The Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE), along with its global brand, the International Society of Broadband Experts (ISBE), CableLabs[®] and NCTA is seeking proposals for papers and presentations for Cable-Tec Expo[®] 2020's Fall Technical Forum workshops.

This year's Program Committee, co-chaired by Ed Marchetti of Comcast and Tom Monaghan of Charter, is searching for subject matter expertise in categories related to the industry's 10G initiative, as well as breakthrough service opportunities that will shape the future of connectivity.

Key Dates & Action Items

- Abstract submission deadline April 10, 2020
- Program Committee selections will be announced by May 12, 2020
- Selected participants are required to complete and submit an electronic version of their white paper and an associated PowerPoint presentation by August 7, 2020, for inclusion in Cable-Tec Expo[®] 2020

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For general questions regarding the Expo technical workshops or the abstract submission process, e-mail us at EXPO_info@scte.org

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Achilles' heel of the goal. We need computer manufacturers and charitable philanthropies and other kinds of ways to bring the costs and availability down to get them to the people who need them. I think a lot of our programs include a piece like that, but it's something we're really going to have to pay attention to." One part of providers' FCC Keep Americans Connected pledge has them opening up hotspots to the public. Some, particularly in more rural areas, are concerned that such actions could cause groups of people to cluster in this time of social distancing. Some providers, like **Star Communications** in Clinton, NC, are announcing drive-up WiFi hotspots at various schools and other public locations, encouraging people to use the hotspots from their cars. On Tuesday, **House Commerce** Republican leader *Greg Walden* (R-OH) called on wireless providers to offer more data for mobile hotspots during COVID-19. On Monday, **Free Press** put forth a plan that would allocate up to \$100bln in subsidies, rebates and tax relief targeted toward broadband, including \$25bln for an expanded Lifeline benefit of up to \$50 per month for a home-internet connection for low-income households. The group wants the FCC to immediately waive ETC rules and allow Lifeline subscribers to apply their \$9.25 discount to any broadband service. "If major residential ISPs like Comcast and Charter (with infrastructure that passes more than 100 million homes, and which already offer reduced-cost services for low-income households) could accept Lifeline, they would be top choices for most Lifeline households," Free Press said.

Olympics Officially Off: Following **IOC** member *Dick Pound's* comments on Monday, the IOC officially postponed the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to a date no later than summer 2021. **Comcast NBC** has the broadcast rights in the US, and **Discovery** in Europe. Early in March, Comcast CEO *Brian Roberts* said Comcast had "insurance and contractual protections" surrounding the games. "Given the unprecedented obligation we all face to contain COVID-19 globally, we fully understand the decision made by the IOC, Japanese government, and the health organizations they are working with to postpone the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics until 2021," **NBC Sports** said in a statement. "We have no doubt that the IOC and Tokyo Organizing Committee will put on an exceptional Games next year, and that the Olympic flame will once again unite the world and provide a light at the end of this tunnel." Discovery also approves of postponing the Games. "Discovery fully supports the IOC and the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee's plan to stage the Olympic Games in 2021 and to make every effort to ensure the well-being of spectators, athletes, staff and the international community," the statement reads. "Our essential planning and deliverables are complete and will now shift into next year. We will continue to develop our products and offerings to best serve our customers and marketing partners in 2021." However, the companies definitely will still feel the impact of the coronavirus. In an **SEC** filing, Comcast said cancellations and closures will affect **Sky** and its **Comcast Cable** business. "Our Comcast Cable business, while our

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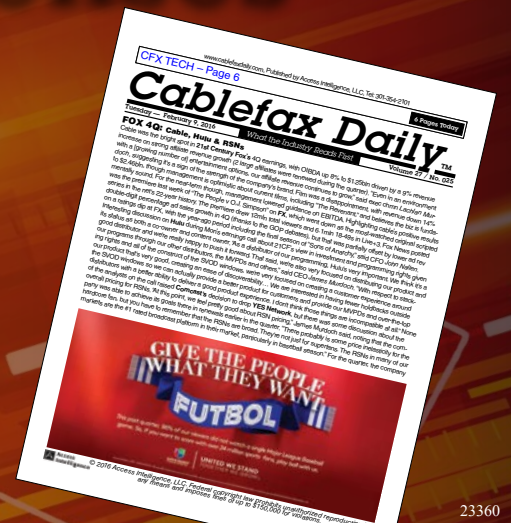
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network performs well to meet the challenge of business and schooling from home, will not be unaffected either as economic stress impacts our residential and business services customer base,” the filing reads. “The impact of COVID-19 could have a material adverse impact on our results of operations over the near to medium term.”

Trump Signs 5G, Broadband Data Bills into Law: President *Trump* signed the Secure 5G and Beyond Act and the Broadband DATA Act into law Monday. The former requires the president to develop a secure next generation mobile communications strategy with the heads of the **FCC**, the **NTIA** and the **DHS** as well as the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense. The Broadband DATA Act requires the FCC to issue new rules to require the collection and dissemination of granular broadband availability data and to establish a process to verify the data’s accuracy. The move was applauded by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, but FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* said the agency does not currently have the funding to carry out the Broadband DATA Act. “And given the Act’s prohibition on the Universal Service Administrative Company performing this mapping work, if Congress does not act soon, this well-intentioned legislation will have the unfortunate effect of delaying rather than expediting the development of better broadband maps,” *Pai* said in a statement.

TWD Finale Delayed: **AMC** announced that the pandemic has made it impossible to complete post-production of the Season 10 finale of “The Walking Dead.” The current season will end with its 15th ep on April 5, with the planned finale airing as a special episode later in the year. The first 8 episodes of the season will be available for free (no authentication required) on AMC.com and the AMC app, immediately following the last Season 10 episode through May 1.

Nexstar, ViacomCBS Renew Station Deals: **ViacomCBS** and **Nexstar** announced a multi-year deal to renew nine **CBS** network affiliations for Nexstar stations reaching 4mln households. The deal extends CBS/Nexstar affiliations that were set to expire later this year and covers two top-50 market affiliates, WNCN-TV (Raleigh, NC) and KLAS-TV (Las Vegas, NV). Other Nexstar-owned CBS affiliates renewed include WNCN-TV (Raleigh-Durham, NC), KGPE-TV (Fresno-Visalia, CA), WYOU-TV (Wilkes Barre-Scranton, PA), KVEO-TV (Harlingen-Brownsville, TX), WTAJ-TV (Johnstown-Altoona-State College, PA), KMC-TV (Minor-Bismarck-Dickinson, ND), WVNS-TV (Bluefield-Beckley-Oak Hill, WV) and KREX-TV (Grand Junction-Montrose, CO). This agreement, coupled with other prior renewals, marks the long-term extension of substantially all of the ViacomCBS affiliation agreements covering 49 Nexstar stations.

oan Says Hair Dryer Report is False: You may have seen a story this week about a Florida county commissioner claiming he’d seen a **One America News** story that found a hair dryer could be used to help treat COVID-19. But **oan** pres *Charles Herring* tells us no such story ever ran on the network. “In fact, **oan** ran two stories prior to the statement made by the municipal official debunking a number of claims, including the use of heat to kill the coronavirus,” he told **CFX**. “Unfortunately, the internet is full of false treatment claims. We are doing everything we can to provide accurate and useful information.” **oan** reported Monday that it had been in contact with the commissioner and its understanding is that “he’s not sure of the actual source of his statement.”

FCC Meeting Goes Remote: The **FCC** will hold its March Open Meeting by teleconference on Tuesday, with the wholly electronic format available to the public via [fcc.gov/live](https://www.fcc.gov/live) and on the agency’s YouTube channel. Because of the format, the FCC expects to vote on items on circulation prior to the meeting, including an further NPRM on time limit requirements for filing program carriage complaints.

YouTube Defaulting to SD Globally: **YouTube** is lowering the quality of streaming on its platforms around the globe in an effort to reduce strain on ISPs during the coronavirus pandemic. The **Google**-owned company has already taken this action in Europe, setting SD as the default setting on all videos. Users will still have the option to access high definition streaming options for the time being. “We continue to work closely with governments and network operators around the globe to do our part to minimize stress on the system during this unprecedented situation,” **Google** said in a statement.

Coronavirus Events Update: **HBO** announced the 2020 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony has been moved to Nov 7. The live broadcast will kick off at 8pm, the first time the ceremony will be broadcast live on the net. -- **NAMIC** national and its chapters canceled all in-person events through May 1. -- The **Alliance for Women in Media Foundation** postponed its Annual Gracie Awards Gala, scheduled for May 19th. It will now take place Sept 22 in Beverly Hills.

Ratings: **Fox News** once again brought in the highest ratings of the week, averaging 4.009mln viewers in primetime. **MSNBC** followed with 2.436mln, and **CNN** with 2.099mln. In total day, Fox News came out on top with 2.488mln viewers, CNN with 1.521mln and MSNBC with 1.461mln.

People: The **Pennsylvania Cable Network** board appointed longtime employee *Debra Kohr Sheppard* as CEO/pres. She’ll replace current pres *Brian Lockman*, who is retiring after 21 years in the position, on April 1. Sheppard has been with PCN for 26 years and has served as svp/COO for the last nine years.