

# Cablefax Daily™

Tuesday — June 9, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 111

## Hurricane Season: COVID-19 Complicates Disaster Preparedness Planning

With hurricane season upon us, cable and broadband operators have COVID-19 to think about as they shore up their disaster preparedness plans. The entire sector is working with **Department of Homeland Security** to ensure that workers are considered essential and will have access to areas if/when a hurricane strikes. As part of this, the industry is working on securing temporary housing for the workers it brings in for disaster recovery efforts. Historically, community centers, gyms, etc were used for temporary housing for hurricane victims, but with social distancing, some local officials are now planning on using hotels. "Some states have modified their evacuation plans to account for the fact that a lot of hotels are emptier than usual because there is less travel going on. They're considering using those as shelters, even before the storm—not just after," said Dr *Rick Knabb*, **The Weather Channel's** hurricane expert. Lodging and food may be difficult for operators' crews if hotels and restaurants are limited because of closures, reduced staff capacity and community use. For example, **Mediacom** has typically had out-of-town crews share hotel rooms, but is now putting one person only in a room because of COVID. Bringing in remote crews to help with restoration could be further complicated because some states, such as Maine and Hawaii, require mandatory 14-day quarantines for out-of-state visitors upon arrival. Late last month, the **FCC** and the **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency** sent letter to governors to encourage them to provide necessary access and resources to communications workers helping to keep Americans connected during the pandemic. Their recommendations included a request that states consider prioritizing distribution of personal protective equipment to communications personnel when available. Companies are providing PPE to their employees, but the availability hasn't been uniform and there's concern that accessing PPE could be exacerbated if the national health emergency is combined with a major national disaster. **NCTA** has been helping with these efforts, noting that DHS guidance that infrastructure workers are essential and critical has helped in most states and local jurisdictions when it comes to gaining access to facilities for construction, upgrades and maintenance during the pandemic. But the association said there are still some local governments that don't follow DHS/CISA guidance. "As the pandemic continues in the face of the upcoming hurricane and wildfire season, communications service providers and their customers would benefit from uniform recognition of DHS letters and other guidance across federal, state and local governments to ensure essential

## THE FAXIES

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN PR & MARKETING

Your hard work is done – and now it's time for you and your team to get recognized!

Honoring those people, shows, and networks who excel in PR, digital content, marketing, advertising, social media and audience engagement.

Submit your entries by Friday, June 12



Submit your entries now to take advantage of the best price available.

[www.TheFAXIES.com](http://www.TheFAXIES.com)

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefax.com ● 301.354.2101 ● Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Publisher: Michael Grebb, 323.380.6263, mgrebb@accessintel.com ● Senior Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com ● Acct. Exec: Olivia Murray, 301.354.2010, omurray@accessintel.com ● Director of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com ● Group Subs or Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,749.00/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

workers have access to plant and facilities to restore service and maintain connectivity during these crises,” NCTA said. Hurricane season kicked off last week, with Tropical Storm Cristobal slamming the Louisiana Gulf Coast Sunday and bringing concerns of flooding very far inland. **AccuWeather’s** long-range Atlantic hurricane season forecast is for a more active than normal hurricane season, calling for 14-20 tropical storms, with seven to 11 possible hurricanes and four to six hurricanes becoming a Category 3 or higher. The Weather Channel is bringing live, on-the-ground weather coverage of Cristobal, with on-camera meteorologists in Grand Isle, LA; Biloxi, MS, Monday; Little Rock; Mobile, AL; and Natchez, MS. Just like operators, the network has spent weeks trying to plan for hurricanes combined with a pandemic. “We’re being very careful. We’ve created new types of microphones for guests so we’re always six feet apart. And travel has become a different animal... Most of our teams are more comfortable driving to a lot of these areas,” said *Nora Zimmet*, Weather’s svp, live programming. Her teams are also being careful not to overwhelm an area’s local stores. “Supplies are something that people in a hurricane zone are going to stock up on. With COVID, we know that a run on supplies will likely lead to a smaller amount left over,” she said. “We have strategically put supplies—enough for a team to live off of for a couple weeks, including MREs and beverages—in about half a dozen cities across the Gulf and Florida and parts of the East Coast so that no one is more than 100-150 miles from a place to get supplies.”

**Black Lives Matter Update:** **Comcast** announced a \$100mln, multi-year plan to advance social justice and equality Monday. In a letter to employees, CEO Brian Roberts said the company is allocating funds to “fight injustice and inequality against any race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or ability.” Over the next three years, \$75mln in cash and \$25mln in media will be distributed in addition to Comcast’s existing commitments. Key focus areas include social justice, where Roberts said Comcast is partnering with and providing grants to a number of organizations, including the National Urban League, the NAACP and the Community Justice Action Fund; employees, with the company accelerating efforts in D&I, providing additional funding to employee resource groups and launching mandatory anti-racism and anti-bias training. “We will educate everyone across the company to better understand race-related issues and have important conversations—however uncomfortable,” Roberts wrote. Comcast also is focusing on awareness and education; digital equity (through Comcast’s Internet Essentials program and support of organizations such as Black Girls Code and BUILD); and small business opportunity. With promises to commit funds to help small businesses affected by COVID-19, with a “substantial portion” going to businesses owned by people of color. NBCU chief diversity officer *Craig Robinson* is spearheading the efforts alongside Roberts and coordinating across Comcast, NBCU and Sky to build programs, allocate resources and partner with national and local organizations. -- In a column for *Dead-*

# Help Save Lives. Donate Blood.

Schedule at [RedCrossBlood.org](https://RedCrossBlood.org)



**American  
Red Cross**

line, *Byron Allen* told Americans what we need to do to “never come back here again.” Allen was six years old when *Martin Luther King Jr.* was killed. “Last night I was sitting in my living room and a convoy of trucks drove by my home filled with law enforcement and National Guard troops,” Allen wrote. “I am a 59-year old African-American man and this brought back vivid childhood memories. That was the very moment I lost my innocence and I went from being a young boy to being a young man. I immediately became a child of war.” Citing Dr. King’s “The Other America” speech, Allen believes 10 things are necessary to truly become “One America, including “a true partnership.” -- **Viamedia** launched the #ChangeStartsRightHere initiative, working to foster positive conversations in local communities about changes needed to help end racism. The ad management company is running a TV spot asking its viewers to join the conversation and contribute to it by inviting local business owners, minorities and law enforcement to create their own 15- or 30- second spots about how they’re working together in their communities. The groups can then upload the videos to Viamedia’s custom portal, and the company will then run the messages as local PSAs for free.

**From the Desk of Rocco:** **Mediacom** CEO *Rocco Commisso* has added his voice to those speaking out about racial injustice. In a memo to Mediacom employees obtained by **Cablefax**, Commisso reflected on his senior year as captain of Columbia University’s soccer team, which had players from 16 different nations and five continents. “The richness of that experience taught me a valuable lesson about the power of inclusion,” he wrote. “Like my Columbia team, the United States has long been a melting pot of diverse people from all kinds of backgrounds and cultures. As someone who immigrated to America at the age of twelve, I firmly believe it is a defining feature of our great Nation.” Commisso went on to say he was shocked and saddened by the events surrounding the death of *George Floyd*. “I sincerely hope the attention being given to this tragedy encourages each member of the Mediacom Family to reflect on our long held corporate belief in diversity and inspires all of us to unite against racial injustice.”

**Fiber Connect a Go for December:** The **Fiber Broadband Association** has rescheduled its annual Fiber Connect conference to Dec 14-16 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville. The conference for fiber broadband professionals had originally been scheduled for June 1-3 at the Opryland hotel.

**Universal Orlando Theme Parks Open:** **Comcast NBCU** began its phased reopening of its Universal Orlando theme parks on Friday to a limited capacity of about 35%. Masks are required except for dedicated areas, social distancing is mandatory, and attendees need to take a temperature check before entering the park. **Wells Fargo Securities** views the phased reopening as a modest positive for **Comcast**. “Taking this step should result in financial impact that is better than feared,” a research note reads. “We note other theme park operators, **Disney** in particular, are expected to remain closed through mid-July, and we suspect it is watching Universal’s reopening with keen interest.”

**The Use of AI During Protests:** Sen *Ed Markey* (D-MA) sent a letter to **Clearview AI** asking for greater transparency in regards to facial recognition monitoring during the nationwide protests against systemic racism. Markey’s inquiry comes in response to reports that law enforcement agencies in certain cities have access to Clearview AI’s technology. “As demonstrators across the country exercise their First Amendment rights by protesting racial injustice, it is important that law enforcement does not use technological tools to stifle free speech or endanger members of the public,” Markey said in the letter. Markey has also requested responses to questions regarding any new contracts Clearview AI has entered into since the protests began.

**Charter Launches Grant Program:** **Charter** is accepting applications for the company’s 2020 Spectrum Digital Education grant program, which supports nonprofits working to educate community members on the benefits of broadband. Charter opened the application portal two months earlier than planned due to the increased need to provide broadband training due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program launched in 2017, and is part of the company’s \$6mIn, four-year cash and in-kind commitment to support broadband education. Applications will be accepted through June 26, and grants will be announced in late August and awarded in September.

**Programming:** **BET** is honoring *George Floyd* on Tuesday with “BET Remembers: George Floyd.” Commercial-free, live coverage of Floyd’s entire funeral services begins at 11am and will on the network and its digital properties. -- **ID** is airing “The Murder of George Floyd: A Nation Responds” on Tuesday at 8pm. The programming features a panel discussion of law enforcement, press and activists. The programming leads into the premiere of “OWN Spotlight: Where Do We Go from Here,” hosted by *Oprah Winfrey* and simulcast across every Discovery net in the US. -- **HBO** will premiere “Welcome to Chechnya” on June 30 at 10pm. The documentary comes from “How to Survive a Plague” director *David France* and highlights the work of a group of activists risking their lives to combat the deadly anti-LGBTQ campaign in the Russian republic. -- **TLC** is expanding its “90 Day” franchise with “B90 Strikes Back” June 22 at 8pm. Stars of “Before the 90 Days” will address tweets and social media posts from fans on each respective episode Monday nights.

# CFX TECH

## Where is 5G?

We've said it once and we'll say it again: the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted just how essential connectivity has become. Whether it's being used for work or play, the internet has entangled itself into every aspect of our lives, and the strength of the network to bear that traffic has become more important than ever before.

As the world begins to re-open, folks are leaving their homes and the safety of their WiFi network speeds. Conversation around the need for 5G has been reignited. Not all of it has been positive, with some claiming that technology may somehow contribute to the spread of COVID-19. But officials and executives alike have been working hard to calm fears surrounding those conspiracy theories and convince Americans that greater network investment can only be a good thing.

"Conjectures about 5G's effect on human health are long on panic and short on science," FCC general counsel Tom Johnson wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed published Thursday. He added that without connectivity, folks would be unable to work and learn from home during the pandemic. If providers don't invest in the next great advancement, the US may not be prepared the next time disaster strikes. "If we delay 5G deployment based on irrational fears and unproven theories, it will only hurt the American people as we plot our path forward."

Kurt Michel, vp, marketing for edge infrastructure provider Veeva, also believes in the future of 5G. With devices multiplying and consumer patience surrounding network speed and latency on the decline, providers have to continue investing in what has kept the world spinning during a pandemic. That also means paying attention to what's happening at the edge and ensuring no data bottlenecks exist when 5G devices connect to the network.

"I think we're really lucky to have had the pandemic hit at this point in time where we have sufficient data connection resources to at least keep people connected and moving forward," Michel said. "The pandemic has only

solidified the argument that we have to continue moving forward with 5G."

At the same time, the pandemic has given those looking to deploy 5G around the world plenty of headaches. The COVID-19 pandemic has already forced Canada to postpone its next 5G spectrum auction until June 2021 in an effort to encourage operators to prioritize delivering solid connectivity while families are still stuck at home. Rakuten Mobile was forced to delay the launch of its 5G service in Japan until the fall.

Here in the US, wireless providers are largely on track with their plans to deliver 5G. The largest hurdles continue to be at the local government level. T-Mobile and AT&T are both claiming that delays in network expansion are to be blamed on delays by local governments in issuing proper permits. AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson also said on the company's 1Q20 earnings call that although the company is also facing workforce challenges, it will still launch nationwide 5G this summer. T-Mobile launched its nationwide 5G network back in December.

Verizon CEO Hans Vestberg has said that modems for the company's high-powered 5G Home product would not be ready until at least October because of a delay in the manufacturing of Qualcomm chipsets needed to make the devices fully operational. Currently, the home product is only available in areas of Chicago, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Houston and Indianapolis.

Verizon has been working on expanding 5G Home since 2017, but has been limited due to its utilization of millimeter wave spectrum. The only homes currently eligible for the product must have a window with a direct view of a 5G panel. — Sara Winegardner

**Synamedia, Amazon Team Up:** Synamedia is partnering with Amazon Web Services to accelerate the adoption of cloud TV services. The pair will also be hosting a webinar Wednesday at 10am ET on "How to Build the New Pay TV Bundle."

# Corporate Licenses

## Cablefax Daily

WHAT THE INDUSTRY  
READS FIRST.

Get reduced subscription rates for multiple readers in your organization.

Find out more! Contact Client Services at  
clientservices@accessintel.com  
www.cablefax.com

