

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Storm Season Prep: Providers Say Community Ties Are Key

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many of us to spend time apart, but providers used that time to forge stronger connections with their community partners. Going into the 2021 storm season, that is going to allow those like **WOW!** to have a better idea of what its teams need to do to restore service to consumers.

“We’re working with local teams on behalf of our community to see that they’re safe, that they need the protection they have. We’re also looking at our local power company to help us restore services during a catastrophic event,” Ed Sesi, vp, operations at WOW! said.

For **Cable One**, communication was key when COVID-19 health protocols and supply-chain challenges required coordination with communities. “This has led to stronger relationships and better understanding in times of crisis and translates to improved response and coordination during hurricanes,” Scott Malone, senior director, safety and technical training for Cable One, said.

Aside from strengthening ties with community partners, providers had to take their own actions to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 for teams on the ground and customers while continuing to repair and restore networks.

WOW! took early precautions, following **CDC** protocol during the pandemic, providing PPE to its teams and figuring out what they could and could not do with regards to accessing customer homes.

“I think we’ll share more of the same with our very con-

servative approach with them [the teams] wearing personal protection gear. And I think that will be the best way to make sure everyone is safe,” Sesi said.

Last year, Cable One added a dedicated COVID-19 incident management team (IMT). IMTs are created to respond to anything outside of business as usual for Cable One. “The 54 cross-functional department representatives from across our family of brands that served on our COVID-19 IMT over the 461 days it was deployed has provided us with a deep, very experienced bench for the 2021 hurricane season,” Malone said.

Aside from COVID-19, more often than not it is the storm, not the season, that prompts a company’s protocol restructuring. WOW’s confidence in its preparation strategy for storm seasons is partially tied to the fact that it has already dealt with its biggest catastrophe to date: 2018’s Hurricane Michael. The storm hit in early October and caused widespread damage across seven states from Florida to Virginia. Significant parts of its network in Dothan, Alabama, were already restored less than a week after the storm hit. Its networks in Panama Beach, Florida, weren’t fully recovered and rebuilt until early January 2019, with some other operators still finishing reconstructions when WOW! announced its recovery.

“Now I know when you’re having a hell of a tornado, which is very damaging to our community, that to give the worst of the low-income areas ... as much chance to be restored as any of the major areas [you must work] really closely with the government agencies in the area. So we’re pretty good about



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our approach to local internal reporting, staffing the resources and conversations to our customer base,” Sesi said, explaining that Michael drove that lesson home.

For Cable One, last year’s Hurricane Zeta required a shift in strategy. Malone said that every hurricane provides the operator an opportunity to identify necessary improvements and best practices. However, some provide more opportunity for review than others. The storm, which hit during the last week of October 2020, caught the operator by surprise. Network repair and recovery continued into early November for Cable One’s customers in Mississippi.

“Hurricane Zeta has affected our preparation strategies by changing our expectation on how late in the season a long-track hurricane can affect our people, communities and infrastructure,” he said.

FCC, USDA, NTIA STRIKE DATA SHARING DEAL

The **FCC**, **USDA** and **NTIA** have reached an interagency agreement to share information about and coordinate the distribution of federal broadband deployment funds. The move, one made in accordance with the Broadband Interagency Coordination Act, will see agency leaders sharing data with each other on the FCC’s programs supporting broadband buildouts in rural areas, the USDA’s Rural Utilities Services grant and loan programs and anything related that is administered by the NTIA. Each of the agencies will also share info about providers in specific geographic areas, levels of service, and whether those partners have or will receive funds from existing or planned federal projects.

ONE YEAR LATER: DEI IN MEDIA

Diversity, equity and inclusion were at the forefront of conversa-

tions in the media industry last year after the murder of George Floyd, and companies have been working to build better communities for all of their employees and customers ever since. Over at **Comcast Corporation**, that meant providing tangible, specific actions that all employees could take to help build on the company’s inclusive culture. The company also provided targeted training and data analysis to help guide individuals toward specific DEI outcomes. “It was a great reflection internally, as well as reflection on how we can increase our impact in communities by leveraging our platforms to amplify underrepresented voices and accelerating efforts to address digital inequity—all of which lays the groundwork for the next 10 years,” *Dalila Wilson-Scott*, the company’s evp/chief diversity officer, told **CFX**. Content companies have also been working to ensure conversations around DEI are had regularly and not just in a time of crisis. Over the last several months, **AMC Networks** has been producing discussion videos called “Can We Talk About This?” to run during movies on linear and its **AMC+** platform that contain elements or characters that are challenging against today’s cultural lens. The first ran on Juneteenth alongside an airing of documentary “The Stand.” **Amazon Studios** recently released an inclusion policy and a playbook with guidelines for its creative collaborators. Some of the specific goals laid out for Amazon Studios productions include that each film or series with a creative team of three or more people in directing, writing and production roles should ideally include a minimum 30% women and 30% members of an underrepresented racial/ethnic group; casting actors whose identity aligns with the character they will be playing and ensuring pay equity exists across casting and behind the camera staff.

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BIDEN'S INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The muddy waters around Biden's infrastructure broadband vision are clearing a little, with the president announcing Thursday that he's struck a deal with a bipartisan group of senators on a \$1.2 trillion framework. As many predicted, it contains \$65 billion for broadband. A **New Street Research** report said analysts have heard, but haven't confirmed, that the broadband portion breaks down to: \$40 billion in grants to states for deployments of new networks, \$6 billion in expanding the scope of private activity bonds; \$14 billion to the USDA's ReConnect program and \$5 billion for affordability and inclusion. "We think this is largely supportive of what we have deemed the bull case in that it provides investment that reduces pressure on industry to fund universal service while not providing funding for a material amount of overbuilding or engaging in price regulation," New Street said.

SURVEY SAYS...

Nearly all TV consumers (95%) watch from at least one ad-supported source, but a majority (79%) also watch from one ad-free source, according to a study from **Hub**. The research also found nearly 1 in 5 people say they cannot tolerate ads during TV shows and movies, but given the choice between a lower cost ad-supported service and a higher-cost, ad-free service with the same content, 58% would choose the former.

RATINGS

UEFA EURO 2020 group stage matches across **ABC**, **ESPN** and **ESPN2** through June 23 delivered an average audience of 869,000 viewers. That marks a 23% increase compared to the group stage matches of EURO 2016. The Saturday Portugal-Germany game on ESPN averaged 1.83 million viewers, making it the largest audience for a UEFA EURO group stage match since 2012. This also ranks it as the third most-viewed group stage match ever on ESPN networks and ABC.

PEOPLE

Luis Ubiñas was elected to **AT&T's** board. He has served as a senior partner at **McKinsey & Company**, as president of the **Ford Foundation**, and as an appointee to both the US Competitiveness Committee of the Export-Import Bank and the International Trade Commission.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Twitter Hits

Reed Hastings @reedhastings · Jun 17
Wild that most TV time in USA is still legacy linear. Stream team needs to up its game. @jasonkilar we need you on the board too.

Nielsen @nielsen · Jun 17
Introducing THE GAUGE, Nielsen's new monthly total TV and streaming snapshot 📊
See how audiences are spending their TV time 📊 nlsn.co/6017yOkw7

Jason Kilar @jasonkilar
Replying to @reedhastings
.@WarnerMedia is already on the board strongly in that largest green pie piece Reed (TNT, TBS, CNN, HBO, CN...). Proud to serve customers in whatever way they choose 😊 Fun to also be the crazy fast(est) growing upstart in @hbo max (2 Qs straight of 2.5M+ US sub adds). 📺

4:17 PM · Jun 17, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Mike O'Rielly @MPOrielly
Legislating on big issues is hard. This development should be good news for reasonable broadband spending and policy — especially those unserved today! Rougher ideas and wishlists likely will be tempered by realism and soundness.

The Wall Street Journal @WSJ · Jun 23
A framework for an infrastructure deal has been reached by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, who plan to meet with Biden Thursday to finalize the package on.wsj.com/3WwC34m

Research

(Source: **TVSquared CTV Accelerated Report**)

- > Prior to COVID-19, CTV ad spend was expected to reach \$10.8 billion in 2021. Now, projections show it surpassing \$13 billion by the end of this year.
- > Between Q120 and Q420, TVSquared saw CTV ad impressions increase by more than 80%, with massive growth tied to the lockdown period.
- > The primary reason for advertising on streaming is incremental reach, with 70% citing the ability to engage with audiences beyond linear.

Up Ahead

- JUNE 28-JULY 1: MOBILE WORLD CONGRESS BARCELONA**
- JULY 13-15: NTCA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM**
- JULY 16: 2021 CABLEFAX DIVERSITY LIST NOMINATION DEADLINE**
- JULY 25-28: FIBER CONNECT 2021**
- SEPT 10: CABLEFAX MOST POWERFUL WOMEN NOMINATION DEADLINE**

Quotable

"It's a tough job. The movie industry is dog-eat-dog, hyper competitive. The average movie cost to make it and market it is anywhere between \$50-\$150 million dollars. And you can spend all that money and in one weekend you blow it away. Therefore it's highly competitive and raw, and can be a lot meaner than politics. But I also met some of the most interesting people and terrific leaders... My job didn't involve me being with a lot of celebrities. I was with them on occasion. I was more on the business side and lobbying for tax or trade or anti-censorship types of things. But it was fun. I do have to tell you going on the red carpet, I would do that at times with my wife, I would think to myself, 'here's the grandson of a guy from Belarus who ended up on the red carpet. Isn't that something?'"

- Former congressman and Ag Secretary Dan Glickman (D-KS) speaking about his time as MPAА chairman with Brian Lamb on C-SPAN's **Booknotes+** podcast.