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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Hurricane Ida: Extended Power Outages, Flooding Make for Long Recovery

Getting company assessments of the damage left in Hurricane Ida's wake will take time, especially with power outages, poor cellphone reception and reports of inoperable 911 lines. Filmmaker *Ava DuVernay* took to **Twitter** Monday afternoon to complain that the disaster isn't getting enough attention.

"No power. Sewage out. No water. Nearly 1 million structures in Louisiana affected. It's 89 degrees there as I type this. Jefferson Parish estimates 20 days to restore power," wrote the creator of **Netflix** miniseries "When They See Us." "We haven't heard from any crew member west of Orleans Parish. No cell/internet. Why isn't this trending?"

On Saturday, DuVernay said her company had evacuated the last of the non-local cast and crew for **OWN** series "Cherish the Day, which had been filming in New Orleans. Ida made landfall Sunday as a Category 4 hurricane, with 150Mph winds and knocking out power for approximately one million people.

The **FCC** activated Disaster Information Reporting for Ida over the weekend, with agency acting chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* promising close monitoring of the situation. As of 11am ET Monday, cable and wireline providers reported more than 338,000 subscriber outages in Louisiana and more than 16,000 in Mississippi. Two Louisiana broadcast stations (WGNO, WNOL-TV) were reported to be out of service. **WGNO** was broadcasting Monday afternoon after part of its control room roof was ripped away from the storm.

Operators such as **Comcast** and **Charter** are working to assess damage, but with significant flooding and debris blocking access to key locations, there isn't a lot of info yet. "Comcast has sent dozens of crew members to assist and will be working closely with local power companies to restore all service interruptions as quickly as possible," Comcast told customers. "Currently, most of Comcast's service interruptions are due to commercial power outages. For the majority of our customers, services should return after power is restored, and access to damaged facilities and downed lines has been cleared."

AT&T said its wireless network in Louisiana is operating at 60% of normal, with significant outages in New Orleans and Baton Rouge due to power outages, flooding and storm damage. "We had key network facilities go offline overnight, and while some have already been restored, some facilities remain down and are inaccessible due to flooding and storm damage," said a mid-day update. **Verizon** and AT&T are offering unlimited calling, text and data to customers in the hardest hit areas of Ida's path.

It's not just broadcasters and cable networks providing televised coverage of Ida. Verizon [recorded](#) a live stream with employees, offering images from the storm and updates on the restoration. *Michael Stiebing*, a senior trainer on Verizon's learning and development team based near New Orleans, was among those appearing in the broadcast. He spoke from his neighborhood, with huge trees down behind him. "Cleaning up and dealing with ... power loss, water loss, running water,

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and just trying to help some people clean up around here who have worse damage,” he said. “I don’t have any damage to my house, so I’m going to go help my neighbor across the street.”

Verizon has set up an employee relief fund to help employees displaced from their homes due to a natural or personal emergency. Since 2013, it has given out more than \$3.5 million in grants to more than 3,000 Verizon employees around the world

Cox, which was hit hard in the same area from Hurricane Katrina 16 years ago, is still in the process of making sure all of its employees are safe and out of harm’s way. It has mobilized employees and resources from across the region to begin network assessments in the significant areas of impact including both New Orleans and Baton Rouge markets. As power is restored, the company will work to ensure customers are reconnected to Cox services.

Cable One said its services are 98% restored at this point, with its Belle Chasse, LA, system taking the biggest hit. The power company has said power won’t be restored to the area for several weeks. All of Cable One’s employees are safe, though five experienced damage to their homes. The company established a Natural Disaster Fund that was used during Hurricane Katrina, the Joplin tornado and Hurricane Harvey that it will once again use for Hurricane Ida to ensure impacted associates receive financial assistance in making repairs.

In the good news category, **C Spire** said its wireless and wireline networks in Mississippi largely escaped damage. Over the weekend and into Monday, only a handful of cell sites had reduced capacity and less than 100 cell sites and facilities were continuing to operate on generators due to the loss of


commercial power. Fiber-based Gigabit internet service to home consumers and an array of voice and data services for businesses were not affected by the storm.

Just as the FCC is offering communications providers its assistance, so is **ACA Connects**. The association reached out to its small and medium connectivity provider members Monday to remind them of ways it can assist, including sharing info with the FCC, connecting them with Members of Congress, finding resources to assist with recovery efforts and more.

BROADCASTER BLOCKS ANTENNA ADS

Remember when broadcasters were encouraging folks to use over-the-air antennas? Apparently, they’d now prefer retransmission consent dollars instead. **Mr. Antenna**, a vendor of outdoor television antennas, is objecting at the **FCC** to transferring the license of KVVU-TV of Henderson, Nevada, to **Gray TV** from **Meredith Corp**. Gray has a pending \$2.285 billion deal to acquire Meredith’s broadcast stations. From April 2019 until this year, Mr. Antenna advertised its outdoor antenna products and services on Meredith-owned KVVU-TV. But it said it was notified that effective July 1, KVVU would no longer accept advertising from vendors whose products presented a ‘cord-cutting’ alternative to cable service. “Mr. Antenna was told that the decision did not originate locally but came from the senior level at Meredith Corporation and would apply to all of Meredith’s television properties,” said comments filed by Mr. Antenna at the FCC. “The reason given for the change in policy was that Meredith’s retransmission consent income is tied to cable subscribership, and that the number of cable households is declining as increasing numbers of people in-

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DEADLINE: FRIDAY, SEPT. 10

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stall outdoor antennas as an over-the-air alternative to cable. Therefore, in the eyes of Meredith, such antennas posed a competitive threat.” If the FCC grants Gray’s acquisition, Mr. Antenna wants a condition that Gray will discontinue the ad policy at KVVU and elsewhere. The vendor also urged the FCC to inquire about whether Gray intends to implement such a policy throughout its TV station universe.

HBO MAX, YOUTUBE ON SPECTRUM GUIDE

HBO Max and **YouTube** launched on **Charter**’s Spectrum Guide on eligible devices across the provider’s service area. Customers can tune directly to channel 2003 for YouTube or 2004 for HBO Max, use the guide’s search function or look for the app’s logos in the Spectrum Guide’s Apps menu to access the video services.

SLING ADDS NCAA BETTING CHANNEL

Sling TV introduced the **DraftKings** College Football channel to its lineup of sports betting information channels. The vMVPD’s subscribers can expect to see information on upcoming NCAA games, point spreads, win chances and more. Sling will also launch a DraftKings Football channel with NFL sports betting information in the weeks ahead. For a limited time, new DraftKings customers can receive a \$50 free bet as well as three free months of Sling Blue, Sling Orange or Sling Blue + Orange.

NCTA WANTS CLARITY ON C-BAND GREENMAIL

NCTA is asking the **FCC**’s Wireless Telecommunication Bureau to clarify one aspect of the implementation of an incremental reduction plan for the accelerated relocation payments tied to the first phase of its C-band clearing process. The WTB said in a public notice that if stakeholders, including programmers and operators, file a challenge to a space station operator’s certification of accelerated relocation, the challenger and the station operator can reach an agreement on their own to drop the challenge. But if they choose to do so, the WTB posed that the challenger would not be able to receive any money or other consideration in excess of expenses incurred in preparing and prosecuting applications, petitions, or other pleadings, effectively banning the use of greenmail. NCTA believes the WTB should clarify that the greenmail rule would not prevent a challenger that chooses to enter into an agreement from accepting the “reasonable consideration necessary to resolve those concerns.” For example, a challenger could claim that new equipment is needed that was not provided. “However, the greenmail rule provides that only the consideration necessary to cover ‘the legitimate and prudent expenses incurred in preparing and prosecuting’ the challenge may be paid, which could be interpreted to bar the provision and receipt of the equipment or compensation necessary to resolve the underlying challenge,” the association said in its comments. “Uncertainty about whether the greenmail rule would prevent satellite operators from providing the consideration reasonably necessary to resolve the underlying challenge could undermine parties’ willingness to engage in such a process.”

FCC TAKES DOWN EBB IMPOSTOR SITE

The **FCC** has taken down a website that mimics the official enrollment site for the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

Run by **WiFi Freedom USA**, the website falsely claimed to administer the program and even offered products like connected devices. The agency and **USAC** took steps to have the website disabled and social media pages removed. They are working with law enforcement on next steps. Consumers who provided their personal information to the site can file a report on the fraud to the **FTC**.

DISH-SINCLAIR UPDATE

We may be hearing nothing but crickets out of **DISH** and **Sinclair** for the next few weeks when it comes to their ongoing retrans consent negotiations. A source has told *Sports Business Journal*’s *John Ourand* that the pair have agreed to another short-term extension of their current deal, and that should keep the stations on DISH’s lineup through the middle of September. Their agreement was originally set to expire on August 16, but talks have continued since with carriage of the Bally Sports RSNs likely being a key point of debate. DISH opted to drop the RSNs from its programming offerings back in July 2019.

FUBO OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES INTEGRATED GAMES

fuboTV is bringing its integrated, free-to-play games and FanView live stats out of beta for the CONMEBOL qualifying matches next month. Starting Thursday, subscribers will be able to stream CONMEBOL matches, use FanView to monitor stats and scores and play predictive games for free all on the same screen. The games will be available on Android and iOS, Android TV, Fire TV, Roku and on the web while FanView will be available on Android TV, Fire TV, LG TV, Roku, Samsung Smart TV, the Xbox One family of devices and the web. Both products will be integrated into additional sports and leagues and on additional devices this fall. The news comes ahead of the launch of the Fubo Sportsbook wagering app, which is scheduled to launch in the fourth quarter.

REDBOX, ANTHEM TAKE PARTNERSHIP DEEPER

Redbox expanded its content deal with **Anthem Sports & Entertainment** to add two channels to its free streaming service. AVOD music and lifestyle service **AXS TV Now** will be joining Redbox’s offering as well as combat sports platform **Fight Network**.

PROGRAMMING

Lifetime unveiled its fall programming slate, beginning with “Harry & Meghan: Escaping the Palace Sept 6. “Imperfect High” and “Dying to Marry Him” premiere Sept 18 and 24, respectively. – A second season of “What’s Good Africa” will premiere on **Revolt**’s linear TV channel Sept 8 at 9:30pm ET. – Season 10 of “Dinner: Impossible” debuts Oct 5 on **Food Network**.

PEOPLE

Lacy Pack joined **iNDemand** as evp/CTO. He’ll report to iNDemand president/CEO *Dale Hopkins* and identify new technologies to boost the company’s capabilities. Pack has previously held leadership positions at **DirectTV**, **AT&T** and **ESPN**. – *Anna Chauvet* was named vp, public policy for **NAB**. She most recently was associate general counsel for the **US Copyright Office**. – **Spectrum Networks** promoted *Andy Lacombe* to news director for Spectrum News 1 in Massachusetts.