

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Recovery Update: Hurricane Damage Still Impacting Some Operators

It's been one month since Hurricane Fiona and three weeks since Hurricane Ian wreaked havoc for cable operators and their subscribers, and folks are finally starting to get back on their feet and chart a course toward recovery.

**Verizon** was one of the hardest hit providers from Hurricane Ian's landfall in Florida, but it's constantly making progress toward full restoration. The vast majority of the immediate restoration work to its network is complete, but there is still a lot of clean-up work to be done at Verizon sites. A Verizon spokesperson told **CFX** that teams are actively climbing towers to realign antennas and replace radio heads that may have been damaged by Hurricane Ian. The wireless provider also has some long-term construction work to do to rebuild the towers and base stations destroyed by the storm, and temporary equipment is in place to keep systems moving. "There is a very long road ahead for recovery and rebuilding work in Southwest Florida, and Verizon's team will be on the ground with Floridians until that hard work is complete," the spokesperson said.

**Comcast Florida's** response team of more than 1,700 technicians and network maintenance and engineering specialists is making steady progress toward repairing damage to its equipment and infrastructure from Hurricane Ian. As of Monday, 25 of its service areas were predominantly restored with 90% of customers in those areas having service restored.

Estimated return dates of service for some other areas run into December.

**WOW!**'s facilities were not directly hit by Hurricane Ian, but some of its customers did experience gaps in service due to early power outages. Its services were back up and running soon after the storm and have remained up since. **Cox Communications** also said Hurricane Ian had minimal impact on its Florida operations with its network performing properly and its customers still being online.

Much of the focus of these natural disasters was in Puerto Rico and Florida, but Hurricane Fiona's path took it on a detour that drastically hurt our friends to the north. Canada's **Rogers Communications** opened the doors of its retail locations in regions impacted to offer customers warming stations as well as charging stations to those that had lost power as a result of the storm.

**FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* spent Monday and Tuesday in Fort Myers, Florida, and Puerto Rico to survey the impacts of both storms firsthand. Her trip agenda included meetings with Puerto Rico Governor *Pedro Pierluisi*, other government and industry officials and a visit to an emergency operations center. Rosenworcel had been critical of her predecessor *Ajit Pai* during her time as a commissioner, calling on the FCC to do more in response to 2017's Hurricane Maria including field hearings and studies into what worked and what didn't in the agency's response. She and Pai did visit the affected areas at that time. In the wake of Hurricanes Fiona and Ian,



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the FCC took a number of actions to monitor the scope of the damage done and to provide relief to carriers. For example, the Commission's **Wireline Competition Bureau** also temporarily waived certain E-Rate, Emergency Connectivity Fund, Rural Health Care, COVID-19 Telehealth, Lifeline, High Cost and Affordable Connectivity Program rules and deadlines to assist service providers and other participants located in areas impacted by Hurricane Ian.

The private sector is also continuing to support relief efforts with **Scripps** announcing Tuesday it has helped raise \$470,000 for people and communities impacted by Hurricane Ian. Approximately \$325,000 has been donated by Scripps viewers to help with local recovery efforts, and another \$145,000 has been donated to the company's Hurricane Ian Employee Relief Fund. It has been funded entirely by gifts from fellow employees, company leaders and Scripps family members. Rogers is fundraising to support Canadians impacted by Hurricane Fiona, having launched a text-to-donate campaign for the **Canadian Red Cross** with the Government of Canada matching donations through Sunday. The campaign will remain open through the end of the year.

#### NETFLIX ON SUB GROWTH, PROFILE TRANSFERS

**Netflix** is optimistic that it is back on the path to accelerating growth, adding 2.4 million global subscribers in 3Q22. Paid net adds in the U.S. and Canada made up a small fraction of that pie, only totaling approximately 100,000. Revenue growth was up 6% YOY thanks to a 5% increase in average paid memberships as well as a 1% increase in average revenue per membership. It is looking to do a lot more in 4Q22,

forecasting 4.5 million paid net adds. Starting in 4Q22, however, the streamer will no longer offer guidance for paid membership as it focuses on revenue as its primary top line metric. "While we're very optimistic about our new advertising business, we don't expect a material contribution in 4Q22 as we're launching our Basic with Ads plan intra-quarter and anticipate growing our membership in that plan gradually over time," Netflix said in its letter to shareholders. "Our aim is to give our prospective new members more choice—not switch members off their current plans." Netflix is pushing out more tools to encourage individuals to stop sharing accounts, rolling out a profile transfer feature Tuesday. People looking to start their own membership that previously used a friend's account will be able to transfer their profile to a new account, including their personalized recommendations, viewing history, saved games and other settings. Users will be notified via email as soon as Profile Transfer becomes available for their accounts.

#### C21 MEDIA LOOKS TO BUY NATPE

UK-based **C21 Media** has issued a letter of intent to **NATPE** management in hopes of acquiring the organization's assets in the wake of NATPE's Chapter 11 filing last week. This doesn't mean a buy of the assets is a sure thing with any acquisition being subject to the approval of the bankruptcy court. C21 Media also announced its plans to launch Content Americas, a Miami show to take place in early 2023 with an identity very similar to that of NATPE Miami. It will aim to spur discussions about Latin American, U.S. and international content coproduction, sales, distribution and development.



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**VERIZON PREPS FOR NBA TIP OFF**

With the **NBA** season beginning tonight, **Verizon** added **NBA League Pass** and **NBA TV** to the **+play** platform, a service for Verizon customers that keeps all subscriptions across devices in a single location. NBA League Pass lets fans watch out-of-market games live with added viewing enhancements, while NBA TV is the league's TV network that carries original programming and certain exclusive games.

**MOTHER OF PEARL**

**Pearl TV**, the coalition of U.S. broadcast companies transitioning to **NextGen TV**, revealed a FastTrack program made to speed up the development and availability of low-cost upgrade receivers. At **NAB** Show in New York, Pearl TV noted that through the program, products will be created to help deliver NextGen TV to 91% of households with displays that have HDMI input but don't have the proper technology to transition. FastTrack will also work with device makers through the process of meeting NextGen TV requirements. – **Pearl TV** is adding support for digital video advertising technology on **RUN3TV**. The Web TV platform has digital ad capabilities equal to the web and CTV and allows for NextGen TV broadcasters to add monetization opportunities.

**COMCAST BUSINESS ENHANCES MOBILE**

**Comcast Business** is allowing companies to have 20 lines of service and is rolling out new data plans for its Business Mobile offering. Now, customers can get 20 Gigs of data for \$120/month, 50 Gigs for \$300/month and 100 Gigs for \$500/month (shared data) across devices. That's on top of the existing options of 1 Gig for \$15/month, 3 Gigs for \$30/month and 10 Gigs for \$60/month. Businesses can also get an unlimited data plan for as low as \$22/line, per month with 20 lines.

**RISE UP, PLUME UPRISE**

**Plume** launched a cloud- and AI-powered connectivity and management solution built for MDUs called Uprise on Tuesday. Uprise lets property managers direct their tenants' connectivity by monitoring residents' networks in conjunction with CSPs, while also providing a single portal with all of the residences' portfolios. The tool also lets tenants stay connected to WiFi in all community areas of their complex. It comes with three services: Hub, a lifecycle management interface that enables network monitoring and tenant management; Harmony, which works to minimize connectivity issues; and Places, which helps decipher building and employee devices from tenants and guests.

**AMCN NAMED HFC PRESENTING SPONSOR**

The Harlem Festival of Culture and **AMC Networks** agreed to a multi-year partnership that makes AMCN the presenting sponsor for all HFC screenings for its first year. AMC will support the festival via programming, talent and live event integration for advertisers to reach Black audiences. HFC will debut a series of live entertainment experiences leading up to the outdoor festival which will be held in summer 2023.

**RATINGS**

**ESPN** eclipsed the 3 million average viewership mark in prime P2+ last week. That was fueled by another weekend of college

football as well as the **MLB** Wild Card series taking place. **TBS** came second with 2.5 million as it broadcast the Cleveland Guardians vs New York Yankees and Houston Astros vs Seattle Mariners ALDS matchups, and **Fox News** followed with 2.19 million viewers. **Fox Sports 1**—which carried the San Diego Padres-Los Angeles Dodgers and Atlanta Braves-Philadelphia Phillies NLDS series—came in at No. 4 in prime at 1.37 million. **MSNBC** rounded the top five with 1.31 million. For total day, Fox News was on top with 1.42 million viewers, followed by ESPN (896,000), TBS (848,000), MSNBC (843,000) and FS1 (562,000).

**FIBER FRENZY**

**Frontier** took another step in its Building Gigabit America initiative, pledging \$800 million to grow its fiber network in Connecticut. The company wants to reach over 800,000 homes and businesses in the state by the end of 2025, the same timeline as its overall goal of reaching 10 million locations nationwide. As of now, Frontier has built its network to more than 500,000 locations in Connecticut.

**DOING GOOD**

As **WOW!** continues its greenfield expansion in the Sunshine State, the company donated \$45,000 to Goldsboro Elementary Magnet School in Sanford, Florida. WOW! CEO *Teresa Elder* was on site for the event and presented the commitment to update the school's Kids Space Center. Also in attendance was **ACA Connects** President/CEO *Grant Spellmeyer*, who gave remarks about the positives of having multiple broadband providers as an option.

**PROGRAMMING**

**Peacock** will be the Spanish-language destination for the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup, with the service streaming every match in Spanish as well as having hour-long pre- and post-match coverage from Qatar. Peacock will have a dedicated World Cup hub along with the Copa Mundial 24/7 Virtual Channel produced by **Telemundo's** digital content brand **Tplus**. Copa Mundial 24/7 will have original programming like "Terraza al Mundial" to preview all 64 matches and "Ecos del Dia," which will recap matches with experts providing analysis, predictions and more. The first 12 matches of the tournament will be available on Peacock's free tier, with the remaining 52 being on Peacock Premium. The World Cup begins with Qatar vs. Ecuador on Nov. 20 at 11am. – Production has kicked off for Season 4 of **HBO's** "A Black Lady Sketch Show." – **BET+**'s "College Hill: Celebrity Edition" is returning for a sophomore season in 2023. Celebrities like *Amber Rose*, *Iman Shumpert* and *Tiffany Pollard* will immerse themselves as students at Alabama State University. Season 1 is available on BET+. – **MSG Networks** is providing viewers with a Spanish-language audio broadcast for Thursday's game between the San Jose Sharks and New York Rangers. It's the first time the network has offered a Spanish-language call for a regular-season NHL game, adding to the Rangers' Hispanic Heritage Night celebrations. Fans can access the audio by selecting the SAP setting on the broadcast.

# GUEST COLUMNIST

## Why Cable is Now Embracing Fiber

by Gary Bolton

President & CEO of the Fiber Broadband Association



Gary Bolton

After decades of “sweating the assets” of the hybrid fiber-coax (HFC) network, fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP) is no longer just for “Greenfield” deployments within the cable industry.

That certainly seemed evident at last month’s SCTE Cable-Tec Expo show in Philadelphia. In several key sessions throughout the three-day engineering extravaganza, senior cable-tech execs extolled the virtues of fiber-to-the-premises architecture and the PON-based services that run on it.

Take Comcast’s Rob Howald. Speaking at a Light Reading breakfast forum at Expo, Howald, a fellow and VP of network architecture at Comcast Cable, said the nation’s largest MSO plans to start integrating FTTP and PON into its cable networks sometime next year as part of its overall drive to offer multi-gig speeds throughout the country.

“Anything that connects to Ethernet is eligible to be your last mile... and pretty much everything connects to Ethernet,” he said as he explained the company’s related Distributed Access Architecture (DAA) strategy. “A first, natural complement after DOCSIS is fiber-to-the-home.”

Or take Midco’s Pao Lo, whose company recently announced plans to deploy FTTP to more than 65,000 homes and businesses in the Lawrence, KS, area and offer 10 Gig service over those lines using XGS-PON technology. Speaking at the same forum, Lo, VP of network engineering at Midco, noted that the midsized operator is preparing for the future even as it continues to upgrade its existing hybrid fiber-coax (HFC) plant for DOCSIS.

“I think fiber is the end game,” he said, noting that Midco will target its initial FTTP deployments to its most competitive markets. “Ideally, we’d love to get to fiber, but we have a legacy plant that we have to upkeep and also be able to maintain competitiveness.”

Or take Fernando Villaruel, chief architect of the MSO practice at Ciena. Speaking at one of the two fiber-oriented sessions that the equipment vendor hosted at Expo, Villaruel said that it makes great financial sense for cable operators to build FTTP networks in rural and other underserved markets, particularly with tens of billions of dollars in public subsidies now available from the federal and state governments.

“There’s enough money,” he noted. “We could rewire the entire U.S. with fiber.”

Leading industry analysts agree that fiber builds and upgrades have now risen to the top of the cable industry’s agenda. For instance, Jeff Heynen, VP of Broadband Access and Home Networking at Dell’Oro Group, said he’s seeing cable operators of all sizes pursuing FTTP builds and extensions in their markets. “We’re seeing that not only at the Tier I level but also at the Tier II and Tier III levels,” Heynen said, speaking on one of the same sessions as Villaruel. “It’s not only a commitment to fiber but also a commitment to multi-gigabit services.”

And who could blame operators? Although innovative technologies and techniques such as DOCSIS 4.0, DAA, spectrum mid-splits and high-splits, and network virtualization all offer plenty of promise for cable, they simply cannot match the multi-gigabit speeds, high reliability, low latency levels, lower operational expenses and other benefits that only all-fiber networks can deliver.

In other words, cable operators are increasingly recognizing that fiber represents their future.

Liberty Global has certainly seen the light. The large European MSO recently formed a joint venture with Telefónica and InfraVia Capital Partners to deploy FTTP to greenfield areas throughout the United Kingdom. Speaking at the opening session of Expo, Liberty Global CEO Mike Fries said he expects the “vast majority” of the company’s footprint to be covered with fiber over the next five to six years.

Fries said the company’s embrace of fiber reflects cable’s “existential” moment. “It’s life or death [for cable],” he declared.

- Gary Bolton leads the Fiber Broadband Association, whose mission is to accelerate deployment of all-fiber access networks.

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