

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Aftermath: Cleanup is On After Milton Tears Through Florida

The industry is grappling with the aftermath of back-to-back major hurricanes, which means assessing damage and helping employees. **The SCTE Foundation** told **CFX** that it had already received more than 100 applications from industry employees for disaster support as of Friday afternoon. Employees in need of assistance can [apply](#) for a grant of up to \$2,500.

Just weeks after Hurricane Helene wreaked havoc on the southeastern U.S., Hurricane Milton made its way through Florida Wednesday night and into Thursday. Approximately 2.17 million customers were without power as of Friday afternoon, according to the utility data aggregator PowerOutage.us, and at least 17 people have died from the storm so far.

The **FCC** noted in its Friday Communication Status Report that it still has its Disaster Information Reporting System activated for 51 counties (initially included 52 counties), and 12.1% of cell sites in affected areas are out of service—down from 12.3% on Thursday. Some counties have nearly half of their cell sites out, including Polk County (42.2%) and Manatee County (41.7%), but Hardee County eclipsed the 50% mark with 51.2% of cell sites being out Friday morning. Two TV stations reported being out of service, and cable and wireline companies reported that 1,185,677 subscribers within the disaster area are out of service.

The Commission is also helping those impacted by offering discounted phone and broadband service through its Lifeline program. It also adjusted requirements so that any qualify-

ing survivors of similar natural disasters can enroll in the program. Qualifying low-income consumers can receive an up to \$9.25 monthly discount on Lifeline-supported broadband internet access service or an up to \$5.25 monthly discount on Lifeline-supported voice service. Lifeline consumers residing on qualifying Tribal lands can receive up to a \$34.25 monthly discount on Lifeline-supported service.

Comcast noted that when power returns, oftentimes its services will be restored as well. The company said in an update Friday at 11am that it has technicians on the ground assessing damage to its network and making repairs. Customers who've been displaced by Milton can request a natural disaster pause on their account to avoid billing for up to six months. Services will be suspended during the pause until connectivity is restored at a damaged home, but customers can still utilize Xfinity WiFi hotspots and access limited on-demand content.

"Restoration across Florida's Barrier Islands on the Gulf including Siesta Key, Longboat Key, Sanibel and Captiva Islands will take longer as our teams work to gain access. In order to enter and assess damage, power must be restored, flooding subside and the area be declared safe by local authorities. We are working closely with local officials and utility companies so that our techs can enter as quickly and safely as possible," Comcast said.

Charter said its Spectrum technicians and engineers were assessing damage and impacted customers before making repairs once deemed safe. Certain repairs, however, require power to be restored first, and Spectrum is working with local

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power companies to begin making repairs once power is back on. Spectrum also announced it's committing a \$100,000 cash donation to the Volunteer Florida Foundation, \$50,000 in contributions to local organizations in the hardest-hit areas and \$250,000 in in-kind PSA airtime to support Milton relief efforts for a total of \$400,000.

Hotwire Communications reported all employees are accounted for, and no known damage has been done to its fiber network in Florida. "We're deeply grateful that all our employees are safe. While widespread power outages are affecting services to some customers, our infrastructure remains intact with no known fiber damage," *Mandy Esposito*, Hotwire's Chief Experience Officer, said in a statement to CFX. "Our teams have been working around-the-clock to ensure services are available to those with power. We are incredibly proud of the collaboration and resolve they have demonstrated during these challenging times."

Verizon reported that many fiber cables had been damaged as cell sites continue to run on backup power amid widespread power outages. The company said it would also offer affected customers free domestic call, text and data usage for postpaid consumer and Small Business customers through Oct. 23.

"We have begun the process of deploying several alternate connections and moving temporary satellite network assets from the safety of our staging areas into the areas of impact. Additionally, a third party fiber provider suffered significant damage to the fiber backhaul serving Polk County, resulting in impacts to service for our customers. Our engineers are engaged and working to quickly and aggressively deploy temporary satellite network assets to provide connectivity while the fiber is being restored," Verizon said.

AT&T also reported impacts to its wireless and wireline network. The provider is waiving several charges for residential and business wireline orders placed now through Nov. 8, including service charges for installation at a temporary or new location and again if a customer moves back to an original location. Additionally, AT&T is donating \$100,000 to Volunteer Florida in wake of Hurricane Milton and will match 100% of the contributions to its Employee Relief Fund to assist employees who were impacted.

While the Milton cleanup continues, the aftermath from Helene is still being sorted through. The FCC's Helene report Friday showed 21 counties in North Carolina and seven in Tennessee are still part of the DIRS activation area. Approximately 7.1% of cell sites in the affected area are out of service, and 68,948 cable and wireline subscribers remain out of service. Two TV stations in NC remain out of service.

INSP is continuing to help with Helene-related cleanup efforts, having teamed up with "Blue Ridge: The Series" star *Johnathon Schaech* in a [PSA](#) encouraging viewers to visit [BlueRidgeStrong.com](#). The website has links to donate to

organizations including Convoy of Hope and Samaritans Purse along with a landing page to buy merchandise in which 100% of the net earnings will go to aid relief efforts. INSP CEO *David Cerullo* will match any financial contribution made by employees during the month of October as well.

DIRECTV STILL WANTS FCC TO RULE ON DISNEY COMPLAINT

If you need a reminder that the dust didn't completely settle when **Disney** and **DirecTV** [ended](#) their blackout last month, just take a look at the docket for the MVPD's **FCC** complaint against the programmer. Although the two reached an agreement that includes new packaging and streaming options, DirecTV didn't remove its FCC complaint that Disney failed to negotiate retransmission in good faith. It told the Commission the programmer predicated a deal on it waiving the right to file complaints against it at the FCC. Disney has [characterized](#) the whole thing as a misunderstanding, saying the two have agreed in the past to execute mutual litigation-focused "clean slate" agreements and it had assumed that DirecTV would agree to do so again, and that it wasn't meant to stop either party from filing complaints at the FCC. DirecTV filed reply comments at the FCC this week taking umbrage with that: "Disney's answer... suggests that each party equally desired generally applicable 'clean slate' language, that the parties did not discuss Disney's proposal much, and that Disney's proposal was never intended to apply to FCC complaints. None of this is true." DirecTV rejected a Disney proposal with clean slate language multiple times and filed its FCC complaint on Sept. 7. It said Disney emailed the next day seeking to 'clarify' that it never meant for the language to apply to FCC complaints. "Because Disney continued to make clear that it would not sign a deal without clean slate language, DirecTV sent Disney draft language excluding FCC complaints on Sept. 11. Disney has not rejected this language, but the parties have not yet finalized a long-form agreement, so the issue may not be quite as settled as Disney suggests," DirecTV told the FCC this week. DirecTV likens the situation to **Hawaiian Telcom's** complaint against **Nexstar**. That complaint remained pending after a deal was reached, with the FCC Media Bureau finding in February that the broadcaster breached its duty to negotiate in good faith by proposing renewal terms that would have blocked it from filing complaints with the Commission. "It would serve both the parties and the public interest for the Commission to make clear that Disney cannot attempt to wall off good faith complaints in this setting," DirecTV told the FCC.

RATINGS

ESPN's "Monday Night Football" continues its hot streak as the Week 5 matchup between the Chiefs and Saints drew 15.91 million viewers across ESPN, ESPN2 and ESPN Deportes. This marks ESPN's most-watched MNF game since November 2019 when compared to non-ABC simulcast games. Additionally, the Week 5 broadcast is the fourth most-watched MNF game dating back to 2015. Pregame coverage has also seen a steady rise, with "Monday Night Countdown" up 6% YOY. "Monday Night Football with Peyton and Eli" reeled in 1.4 million viewers on ESPN2.

PROGRAMMING

Acorn TV announced the production of a new six-part murder mystery starring Alicia Silverstone. "Irish Blood", an Irish-based drama, sees lawyer Fiona Sharpe return to her family's homeland to uncover the mysteries surrounding her father's disappearance. Production has commenced in Dublin with no set date for release.

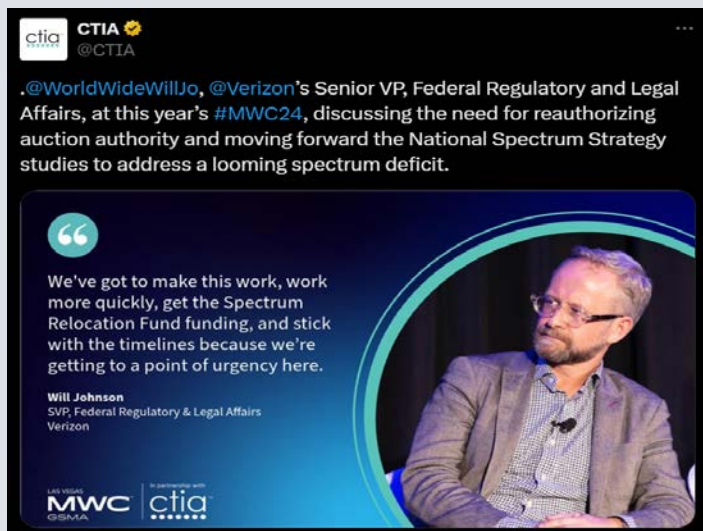
- Former NFL MVP Cam Newton has joined ESPN. The former star will primarily appear on "First Take," joining analysts Stephen A. Smith and Molly Qerim. Newton made his ESPN debut Friday during a live taping of First Take at Tennessee State University as part of the show's HBCU roadshow.

PEOPLE

PBS has brought on Geoff Daniels to serve as VP, Programming and Development. Daniels will lead the development and execution of programming strategy, specifically relating to science, natural history, history and arts genres. Daniels previously served as executive director for Jackson Wild, where he led programming and strategy for the natural history media organization. - Kansas-based broadband provider Twin Valley appointed John Sullivan as its new VP, Operations. Sullivan previously held the same post at Charter since January 2021. In his new role, Sullivan will oversee planning, network and expansion operations.

 **CABLEFAX DASHBOARD**

Social Media Hits



CTIA @CTIA

.@WorldWideWillJo, @Verizon's Senior VP, Federal Regulatory and Legal Affairs, at this year's #MWC24, discussing the need for reauthorizing auction authority and moving forward the National Spectrum Strategy studies to address a looming spectrum deficit.

Will Johnson
SVP, Federal Regulatory & Legal Affairs
Verizon

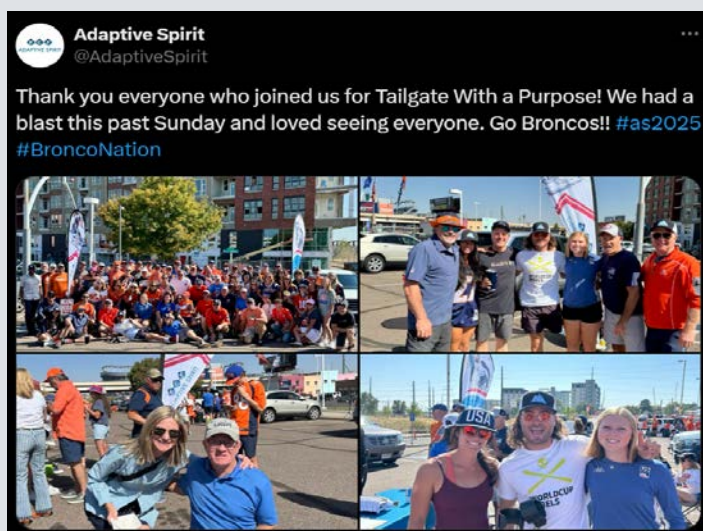
“We've got to make this work, work more quickly, get the Spectrum Relocation Fund funding, and stick with the timelines because we're getting to a point of urgency here.”



Verizon News @VerizonNews


“There's just a proud moment we drop whatever we're doing and say yes we'll come!”

V Teamer, Brandon Jones shares his experience on the aftermath of Hurricane Helene and how he's lending a helping hand to his community. Stay safe Brandon and thank you for what you're doing for your community. #hurricanehelene

Adaptive Spirit @AdaptiveSpirit

Thank you everyone who joined us for Tailgate With a Purpose! We had a blast this past Sunday and loved seeing everyone. Go Broncos!! #as2025 #BroncoNation




Up Ahead

- OCT. 21-22:** [WICT Network Leadership Conference; NYC](#)
- OCT. 22-23:** [38th Annual NAMIC Conference; NYC](#)
- OCT. 23:** [The Kaitz Dinner; NYC](#)
- NOV. 14:** [Horowitz Research Cultural Insights Forum; Miami](#)
- DEC. 4:** [Cablefax Most Powerful Women Celebratory Luncheon; NYC](#)