

Wireless Saves Lives

Resiliency, Readiness & Collaboration

2017 was a historic year for natural disasters in the United States, and with damages totaling \$306 billion, it was the costliest ever for domestic weather and climate disasters.

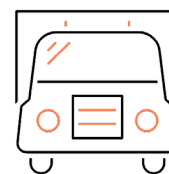
Three once-in-a-generation hurricanes hit the United States in a 25-day span, and with lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy, the wireless industry launched well-coordinated response and recovery efforts in advance of, during and following the storms.



On November 6, only ~43% of Puerto Ricans had commercial power, but **74% had wireless coverage.**



In Harvey's initial phase, **96,000 calls to 9-1-1** were delivered to Houston's 9-1-1 center.



Prior to Irma's landfall, carriers **staged fleets of generators, drones, fuel & more** so they could deploy as soon as it was safe.

Harnessing Innovation in Critical Situations

Each storm is unique, as is how those storms impact a region's critical infrastructure like roads and energy grids. At one point, more than two-thirds of Florida lost power. In Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Irma and Maria knocked energy grids offline entirely.

After the storms passed, wireless providers rushed in to make repairs and bolster their networks, flying in portable generators and cell equipment and using new technologies to restore connectivity even faster. Carriers deployed microwave technologies to bridge gaps due to damaged fiber lines and deployed drones to assess cell towers quickly. They also experimented with new technologies like Project Loon and flying COWs.



R. Worthington talks on her cell phone with a 911 dispatcher as she gets out of her car after her vehicle became stalled in floodwaters from Harvey in Houston, Monday, Aug. 28, 2017. (AP Photo/LM Otero)



A Texas DPS officer speaks to command on the phone during rescue operations due to flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey in Houston, August 31, 2017. John Glaser/CSM. (Cal Sport Media via AP Images)

In the Community

Wireless providers worked closely with federal, state and local officials throughout recovery efforts to navigate each landscape and expand services for first responders. The industry contributed millions of dollars to charitable relief efforts, facilitated Text to Give campaigns and waived fees and charges for impacted customers so that they could stay connected.



News Headlines

[So far, cellphone networks have weathered Harvey / Associated Press, Aug. 31](#)

Roads, refineries and other infrastructure have taken a beating in the Texas and Louisiana regions hit by Harvey — but cellphone networks so far remain largely functional. One reason: Big carriers brought in supplemental equipment and backup power and turned to drones to diagnose problems.

[VA crews work to keep cellphone coverage going ahead of Irma / NBC 12, Sept. 8](#)

Cell phones and access to social media proved to be life-saving during and after Hurricane Harvey, so companies are stepping up ahead of Irma to create that lifeline.

As the forecast becomes clearer, [carriers] will be able to better assess where the impact will be. However, they're not waiting to prepare so they can provide relief to customers in the hardest hit areas.

[What cellphone companies are doing to restore service in Puerto Rico / CNN, Sept. 27](#)

Cell phone companies are sending emergency equipment and engineering crews by planes and barges to the island to address the crisis.

The recovery process is a group effort. "All the wireless carriers are working together and sharing resources to get people back online as quickly as possible," a spokesperson for T-Mobile said in a statement. "But it's a long road ahead."