Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of Recommendations of the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks	EB Docket No. 06-119

VERIZON'S COMMENTS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL REVIEWING THE IMPACT OF HURRICANE KATRINA ON COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Verizon[1] supports improving the resiliency and reliability of the Nation's communications infrastructure, developing and implementing disaster recovery plans, and having the resources and trained personnel in place and ready to respond to disasters. Verizon agrees with the Independent Panel Report[2] that the Commission can take certain steps right away to improve disaster response and recovery. Verizon recommends that the Commission take the following steps as soon as possible.

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[1] The Verizon companies participating in this filing ("Verizon") are the regulated wholly owned subsidiaries of Verizon Communications Inc. and Cellco Partnership, d/b/a "Verizon Wireless". Unless otherwise noted, in the filing, the term "Verizon" includes Verizon Wireless.

[2] *See* Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks, *Report and Recommendations* ("Independent Panel Report") (attached as App. B to *Hurricane Katrina NPRM*, EB Docket No. 06-119, FCC 06-83 (rel. June 19, 2006)).

- The Commission should remove the one-year time limit on Special Temporary Authorities ("STAs") and waivers for disaster planning and response or change its rules so that STAs and waivers are not necessary for disaster planning and response (*see infra* at 15 - 16).

- The Commission should adopt an expedited procedure for temporary spectrum leases (*see infra* at 16).

- The Commission should promote the categorization of telecommunications repair workers as emergency responders under the Stafford Act in order to provide them with security and transport to areas affected by a disaster so that network repairs can be made (*see infra* at 17, 19 - 20).

- The Commission should charter the NRIC VIII Council to address, among other things, updates to best practices to account for new network technologies and applications (*see infra* at 8 - 11).

- The Commission should improve outage monitoring by establishing a single repository or point of contact for communications outage information in the wake of a disaster (*see infra* at 16 - 17).

- The Commission should encourage the development of streamlined credentialing procedures so telecommunications repair workers can more readily access disaster areas and perform restoration activities (*see infra* at 18 - 19).

Overlapping, duplicative, or inconsistent disaster response initiatives should be avoided, and the Commission should not adopt practices or procedures in areas that have already been addressed by the National Coordinating Center for Telecommunications ("NCC") and the Network Reliability and Interoperability Council ("NRIC"), or providers such as Verizon.

I. VERIZON'S LEGACY OF SERVICE AND THE EXPERTISE IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS OF THIS COMMISSION AND THE INDEPENDENT PANEL

Effective and reliable business continuity planning and emergency management are critical to Verizon's core business values. Verizon's spirit of service in responding to disasters stretches back to its roots in the nineteenth century -- from Angus Macdonald's immortalized

heroics during the great blizzard of 1888[3] to Maureen Breault, a Verizon technician who voluntarily left her home in New York last year to join 100 of her fellow employees to help restore communications in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The Commission is well aware of the company's Herculean efforts in responding to the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, the New York City blackout in 2003, and the hurricanes in 2005. During the most recent of these disasters, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, Verizon Wireless opened its stores and established Emergency Communication Centers in the affected areas to provide residents free local and long-distance calls, battery charging and technical support to anyone in need of these services due to the hurricanes. *See* Attach. A (*Service Improvements Continue in Baton Rouge, Pensacola, Mobile: Network Equipment Ready to Join in New Orleans Recovery Efforts.* Verizon Wireless Press Release September 1, 2005; *Normal Operations in Baton Rouge, LA, Pensacola, FL and Jackson, MS; Service Improvements Continue in Mississippi Gulf Coast, Mobile, AL and The North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain; Phone Banks Set up to Help Evacuees Contact Family*, September 3, 2005). In addition, Verizon Wireless also provided more than 10,000 wireless devices, including wireless phones and data air cards, as well as free wireless service, to key organizations involved in disaster relief and recovery efforts in the devastated areas. *See* Attach. B (*Company Provides Unprecedented 10,000 Phones and Internet-Enabled Devices to Aid Relief Workers and Evacuees*, September 9, 2005). The employees of Verizon also worked tirelessly not only to re-build telecommunications

[3] *See* http://www.telcomhistory.org/vm/heroesMacdonald.shtml (in March 1888, during a severe snowstorm, Angus Macdonald's crew in West Boylston, Massachusetts, and other crews along the newly installed long distance line between Boston and New York City "began patrolling on snowshoes, repairing any downed and broken lines they came across, and maintaining service throughout the blizzard").

networks and infrastructure, but also to assist hurricane victims in other important ways by setting up dozens of telephone banks at evacuee centers, *See* Attach. C (*Helping Evacuees Every Way We Can*, VZOnline, September 2005) distributing over 10,000 prepaid calling cards to hurricane victims, *id.*, assisting American Red Cross responders by providing wireless telephones in shelters and laptop computers with wireless broadband access, *See* Attach. D (*Katrina Hits Wireless Service, Employee Homes,* VZOnline, September 2005) and donating over $8.3 million through the employee matching gift program run by the Verizon Foundation. *See* Attach. E (*Helping Katrina's Victims*, VZOnline, September 2005).

This Commission has also responded swiftly and effectively to disasters. After Hurricane Katrina, for example, hundreds of Commission employees were involved in disaster response efforts, working 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Remarks of Kevin J. Martin, Chairman, Federal Communications Commission, Second Meeting of the FCC's Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks (March 6, 2006). The Commission devoted significant time and resources to enable first responders to communicate and to facilitate companies' ability to restore services in the region. *Id.* The Commission also provided millions of dollars for immediate support. *Id.* For all people eligible for federal disaster assistance, the Commission provided wireless handsets and a package of 300 free minutes. *Id.* These funds also helped those who lost phone service reestablish their lines of communication and supported the telecommunications needs of the region's schools and health care providers, including American Red Cross shelters. *Id.* The Commission also assisted the private sector by providing temporary waivers of certain regulatory requirements and special authorities so that the communications industry could restore the telecommunications network as

quickly as possible. *E.g., BellSouth Special Temporary Authority* Order, 20 FCC Rcd 14657 (WCB 2005).

Establishing the Independent Panel to review the impact of Hurricane Katrina was also an effective response to Hurricane Katrina. *Hurricane Katrina NPRM*, ¶ 3. The Independent Panel worked diligently and quickly to gather the facts surrounding the effects of the hurricane on the region's telecommunications networks. The Independent Panel then promptly developed a list of recommendations aimed at improving the resiliency and reliability of the nation's telecommunications infrastructure and disaster preparedness. The hard work and focus of the members of the Independent Panel is to be commended.

II. THE CRITICAL ROLE PLAYED BY PROVIDERS SUCH AS VERIZON, IN DISASTER PLANNING, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY

As an initial matter, providers such as Verizon have substantial experience in disaster preparedness, response procedures and best practices. As discussed below, Verizon has developed consistent disaster response and recovery procedures that also recognize and account for the differences in technologies, network infrastructures, customer bases, and regulatory environments.

Verizon has emergency response and recovery plans in place to address business continuity. Indeed, it is Verizon's written corporate policy to establish and maintain plans regarding continuity of operations and continuity of management, together with emergency operations centers, alerting lists, and alternate temporary locations deemed necessary to facilitate the installation, maintenance and restoration of critical telecommunications or information services under conditions ranging from local emergencies to widespread disaster. Verizon's policy also provides that Verizon will participate in the NCC, which, as noted above, serves as

the national point of contact for telecommunications emergency preparedness matters within the United States.

Verizon's overall emergency response and recovery efforts are managed at a primary emergency operations "hub" -- the Verizon Emergency Operations Center (EOC) -- located in New Jersey. Verizon also maintains a back-up emergency operations center in the event that the Emergency Operations Center is affected by a disaster. When activated, the Emergency Operations Center is staffed by members of Verizon's Business Continuity and Emergency Management team, representatives from several Verizon departments and Verizon's representatives to the NCC.

Verizon's business units have also divided the country into specific regions based on their respective business needs and established specific continuity programs and plans that are appropriate for each of its regions. For example, one of Verizon's business units has a Regional Preparedness Plan for the Southeast Region that provides for appropriate equipment to be pre-positioned within a certain number of hours before estimated landfall of a hurricane. There is another Plan for the West Coast Region that includes procedures for, among other things, the aftermath of an earthquake. Similarly, there is a Plan for the New England Region that addresses contingencies for severe winter storms, including ice storms, which can lead to wide-spread power outages.

Verizon manages its response to disasters and emergencies through a Business Continuity Governance Structure comprised of four tiers of decision-making bodies – an Executive Policy Council, an Executive Steering Committee, three Executive Working Committees (Verizon Domestic Telecom, Verizon Wireless, and Verizon Business), and a Business Continuity Planning Committee. These Committees coordinate with Verizon's Cyber and Security teams to

establish appropriate business continuity policies, strategies, priorities, and guidelines. Verizon's Business Continuity Governance Structure also coordinates closely with other public and private organizations, including the NCC, the NRIC, the FCC, and other telecommunications service providers.

Service protection and restoration strategies are an integral part of Verizon's network management and operations. Verizon's networks are comprised of numerous components that are connected using diverse transmission systems, circuits, and network technologies. Verizon's Network personnel have the ability to re-route traffic dynamically over Verizon's networks to address outages at a specific location. This capability makes Verizon's networks more resistant to the impact of a local weather emergency or disaster.

Verizon also maintains Network Operations Centers that monitor all network facilities, including transmission facilities, switches, and cell sites across Verizon's networks. These Network Operations Centers are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week with experienced personnel who work closely with regional and local field operations teams and with vendors to coordinate and expedite the restoration of service in the event of outages.

The Network Operations Center technicians work with the field operation managers, and personnel are dispatched to the affected site as needed. An inventory of standard spare parts and repair equipment is available to technicians in centralized network locations. Verizon also has standing agreements with critical vendors to get 24 hours a day, seven days a week support from their engineering personnel and obtain replacement equipment if required.

Every critical component in Verizon's networks is protected by automatic power back-up systems. If power from commercial sources is lost as a result of a disaster, Verizon's back-up power systems are activated automatically for affected switches, transmission systems, and data

centers. This is accomplished by installing large banks of batteries for network equipment and diesel generators to charge those batteries. Verizon also has arrangements with its fuel suppliers to refill fuel tanks as needed, allowing the Verizon's critical network components to operate until commercial power is restored.

In addition, buildings housing Verizon's switches are designed to provide maximum protection for their systems and services. They have automatic fire detection and suppression systems, as well as physical security systems and alarms to prevent entry by unauthorized personnel.

For its networks providing wireless (CMRS) services, Verizon protects its cell site operations in many ways, including redundancy in the equipment, automatic power back-up systems, automatic fire detection systems, and physical security systems and alarms. Through arrangements with vendors, the major components of a cell site -- up to and including the building and tower -- become an immediate priority restoration effort on the part of both Verizon and its vendors.

Verizon also maintains and utilizes portable cell sites referred to as cells-on-wheels ("COWs") and cell-on-light-trucks ("COLTs"), which are fully functional generator-powered cell sites that can replace or enhance network coverage and capacity in a given area. *See* Attach. D at 2. These portable cell sites are strategically located and may be quickly deployed to an area that is affected by a weather-related or other disaster.

III. THE CRITICAL ROLE PLAYED BY THE NCC AND THE NRIC IN DISASTER PLANNING, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY

The NCC and the industry representatives to the NRIC also have substantial experience in disaster preparedness procedures and best practices. The Commission should continue to

support their work by chartering the NRIC VIII Council to, among other things, update best practices to account for new network technologies and applications. In addition, the Commission should continue to allow the best practices developed by these organizations to remain voluntary.

The National Coordinating Center. As the Commission is aware, the industry and governmental representatives that jointly comprise the NCC have widely recognized expertise in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. As the lead agency for the communications Emergency Support Function set forth in the National Response Plan, the National Communications System has designated the NCC as the focal point for the operational response, bringing together all federal responders and the communications industry. Through this government/industry partnership, restoration of the Nation's most critical communications is coordinated to ensure that all resources are brought to bear, from both government and industry.

To fulfill its broad mission, the NCC has developed several initiatives and capabilities to respond to disasters and crises. One is the Communications Resource Information Sharing Initiative, which identifies transportable and other communications equipment of the federal government to be used on a shared basis with other federal agencies to support national security and emergency preparedness. Other Executive Branch directed capabilities include the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service ("GETS"), an emergency telephone service to support emergency communications, and the Wireless Priority Service ("WPS"), an emergency wireless telephone service to support emergency communications. The NCC also manages the Telecommunications Service Priority ("TSP") Program, a federal program to assist telecommunications providers in prioritizing requests to provision and repair emergency communications services during emergencies.

The Network Reliability and Interoperability Council. The Commission knows that, in addition to the NCC, the industry-led NRIC brings together telecommunications representatives with substantial expertise in disaster planning, response, and recovery to identify, develop, and recommend the adoption of industry "best practices." The NRIC was first established by the FCC in 1992 to study the causes of specific and general service outages and develop recommendations to reduce their number and their effects on consumers. NRIC Publications, First Council, http://www.nric.org/pubs/index.html. Since then, the FCC has convened the NRIC seven times.

The NRIC VI Council included a Verizon representative co-chaired focus group on Disaster Recovery and Mutual Aid. The result of this focus group was a series of best practices recommendations and a document reaffirming the Mutual Aid Agreement, which was signed by the original Bell Operating Companies following the break-up of AT&T in the 1980s. After Hurricane Katrina, for example, BellSouth invoked the Mutual Aid Agreement, and Verizon, AT&T and Qwest, as well as other carriers worked together to provide the assistance BellSouth requested.

In addition, the Physical Security focus group of the NRIC VI Council accomplished several objectives: a systematic assessment of communication infrastructure vulnerabilities; the creation of an integrated vulnerabilities-threats-best practices framework; the formulation of one dozen recommendations; the identification of 37 areas for attention; and the development of over 300 physical security prevention and restoration best practices. NRIC VI, Homeland Security-Physical Security Focus Group 1A, Issue 3, Final Report at 7 (Dec. 2003), http://www.nric.org/fg/nricvifg.html. In connection with the last accomplishment, the NRIC VI Final Report states that "NRIC Best Practices have been recognized as the most authoritative

guidance in the world for optimizing the network reliability of communications networks." *Id.* at 14.

It is important to note that NRIC Best Practices are strictly voluntary and are intended to remain so. Indeed, according to the Final Report, "[e]fforts by government authorities to impose these as regulations may jeopardize the industry's willingness to work together to provide such guidance in the future." *Id.* at 15. Verizon strongly agrees. The telecommunications industry is diverse and does not lend itself to the application of a single set of best practices. Rather, NRIC Best Practices are most rapidly and most effectively applied by leaving specific implementation decisions to individual firms. Each provider should retain the ability to use its own technical and operational judgment to determine how, when, where to deploy NRIC Best Practices to maximize network reliability and security at the least cost. For these reasons, any best practices, whether developed by the NRIC or other bodies, must remain voluntary.

The NRIC VII Council concluded its work in 2005, and the NRIC VIII Council has not yet been chartered. One action the Commission could take right away is to convene the NRIC VIII Council to address, among other things, some of the recommendations of the Independent Panel by updating best practices to take into account new technologies and applications. Verizon supports chartering NRIC VIII for this and other appropriate purposes, and Verizon representatives are ready to take up this important work.

In short, in addition to the Commission, there are several public and private organizations with substantial experience in disaster planning, response, and recovery, including the NCC, the NRIC, and providers including Verizon. These organizations have developed procedures, recommendations, and voluntary best practices for disaster preparedness and response. In reviewing the Independent Panel Report, the Commission should not adopt recommendations in

areas already addressed by these organizations, but there are several steps the Commission can take now to improve network resiliency and reliability. These steps and the specific recommendations of the Independent Panel are discussed below.

IV. THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL

The Independent Panel's recommendations are organized into four areas: (A) "pre-positioning the communications industry and the government for disasters in order to achieve greater network reliability and resiliency;" (B) "improving recovery coordination to address existing shortcomings and to maximize the use of existing resources;" (C) "improving the operability and interoperability of public safety and 911 communications in times of crisis;" and (D) "improving communication of emergency information to the public." *Hurricane Katrina NPRM* ¶ 6. As discussed below, many of the Independent Panel's recommendations in these areas have already been implemented and widely adopted by telecommunications providers, including Verizon.

A. Pre-Positioning for Disasters

In the area of pre-positioning for disasters, the Independent Panel developed recommendations for equipment pre-positioning and emergency checklists, public awareness and education, automatic relief from regulatory requirements, and outage monitoring. Many of these recommendations have already been implemented as part of Verizon's business continuity and emergency management plans.

Equipment Pre-Positioning and Emergency Checklists. Verizon supports the use of voluntary plans and checklists to cover minimum requirements such as power reserves, essential equipment, sparing levels, drills, emergency center coordination, and other areas. Such voluntary plans and checklists have proven beneficial. For example, during the September 11th

attacks, the 2003 blackout in New York City, and the hurricanes of 2005, Verizon (in large part due to internally developed plans and checklists) relied on the use of pre-positioned and portable generators to assist in network recovery.

Most recently, at the request of the FCC, the Network Reliability Steering Committee ("NRSC") initiated an industry team to produce a hurricane checklist with preparation and recovery items. This team includes representatives from local exchange carriers, wireless carriers and CATV companies. Verizon is an active participant on this team. The output from this work could be used immediately and might serve as a foundation for further (as necessary) NRIC activity.

The members of the NRIC have the necessary experience in disaster preparedness to continue to provide updates to best practices documents. Updates to the NRIC best practices are needed in order to account for the use of the latest network technologies and applications. The NRIC best practices are an excellent resource as they are the result of the effort of a focused team of industry experts.

The Independent Panel also recommended training exercises to evaluate disaster response and recovery plans. Verizon supports drills and exercises for every organization involved in disaster response. For its part, Verizon conducts periodic internal exercises and whenever possible participates in exercises at the local and state levels. In addition, Verizon participates in regional exercises conducted by the Department of Homeland Security, such as the recent exercises held in the Gulf Coast and Northeast states as well as national exercises conducted by the federal government. Verizon also joins exercises specific to the communications sector as part of the National Response Plan conducted by the National Communications System, the General Services Administration ("GSA"), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency

("FEMA") in all regions of the country. In 2006, as part of this effort, Verizon participated in a week-long training exercise held in Florida specifically directed at hurricane response. Additionally, the West Coast Regional Control Center is scheduled to conduct an earthquake exercise this month, on August 23, 2006.

The Independent Panel recommended that organizations involved in disaster response and planning provide contact information for emergency planning and response personnel. This recommendation has already been implemented by the NCC. The NCC Watch Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with contact information for over 30 communications company representatives. By calling the one telephone number for the NCC Watch Center, a caller can access the communications companies represented in the NCC. The NCC should continue to be the primary contact point to reach critical communications company personnel. Verizon also supports providing emergency personnel contact information at the local levels through the state Offices of Emergency Management.

The Independent Panel recommended that industry perform routine archival of critical systems backups and secure off-site storage. Verizon supports this recommendation and performs routine archival of critical systems backups and off-site storage of its critical systems. In making decisions about what and how to archive, several factors need to be considered, including the importance of the application, system, or database to be archived, the requirements of the business unit requesting storage, and the costs of new software and hardware to perform the archival. It should be noted that determining which business systems should be archived and how should be left to each telecommunications provider to determine for itself.

Public Awareness and Education. Verizon supports Commission efforts to educate public safety officials and personnel about the availability and capabilities of alternative

communication technologies, such as wireless phones, pagers, satellite, portable towers and repeaters, point-to-point microwave links, and other systems less reliant on the PSTN. Verizon suggests that the Commission collaborate and coordinate such efforts with the National Communications System to conduct the training in conjunction with the Regional Emergency Response Training Seminars run by FEMA, GSA, and the National Communications System.

Automatic Relief from Regulatory Requirements. The Independent Panel recommended that the Commission consider amending its rules to permit automatic grants of certain types of waivers or special temporary authorities. Verizon supports this recommendation and agrees with the list of possible rule waivers and special temporary authorities identified by the Independent Panel. *See* Independent Panel Report at 32-33.

The Commission recently granted Verizon, AT&T, BellSouth and Qwest Special Temporary Authorities and waivers to support disaster planning and response, thereby providing automatic relief of certain regulatory requirements when these carriers invoke their emergency management plans to prepare for, respond to, or recover from a disaster or other network crisis. *See, e.g., Petition of BellSouth Corporation for Special Temporary Authority and Waiver to Support Disaster Planning and Response,* Order, WC Docket No. 06-63, DA 06-1251 (rel. June 9, 2006) ("June 9 Order"). Verizon has already taken advantage of this regulatory relief by including employees of Verizon's separate affiliates in company-wide integrated disaster planning sessions. Attendees were able to share detailed information about network architecture, vulnerabilities, and "choke points" and then discuss and develop appropriate contingencies. Before the Commission's June 9 Order, Verizon could not have conducted such disaster planning without being subject to the various separate affiliate transaction requirements. Verizon

therefore appreciates the Commission's decision to allow joint planning between and among its various business units.

In the June 9 Order, the Commission limited the disaster planning relief to a one-year period that will expire in June 2007. Verizon will need to conduct disaster planning well beyond June 2007 to prepare for, among other things, next summer's hurricane season. The Commission should therefore reconsider the one-year limitation of the regulatory relief provided in the Order, so that Verizon and other affected providers will know now that they may count on the ongoing ability to conduct integrated disaster planning between and among their various affiliates beyond June 2007. Alternatively, the Commission should change its rules so that STAs and waivers are not necessary for disaster planning and recovery.

In addition, in 2005, the Commission twice granted Verizon Wireless authority to lease spectrum temporarily to vendors operating CMRS equipment to assist the Department of Defense in the Katrina recovery effort.[4] In both cases, the Commission acted quickly to grant Verizon Wireless' request. In this proceeding, the Commission should adopt an expedited procedure for temporary spectrum leases. The Commission should also explore working with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to develop procedures whereby carriers would be authorized to lease spectrum directly to federal government agencies on a temporary, emergency basis.

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[4] Wireless Telecommunications Bureau Assignment of License Authorization Applications, Transfer of Control of License Applications, *De Facto* Transfer Lease Applications and Spectrum Manager Lease Notifications Action, *Public Notice*, Report No. 2270, File No. 0002320343 (granted Sept. 28, 2005); Wireless Telecommunications Bureau Assignment of License Authorization Applications, Transfer of Control of License Applications, *De Facto* Transfer Lease Applications and Spectrum Manager Lease Notifications Action, *Public Notice*, Report No. 2288B, File No. 0002345673 (granted Oct. 13, 2005).

Outage Monitoring. The Independent Panel recommended that the Commission coordinate with other federal and state agencies to identify a single repository or point of contact for communications outage information in the wake of a disaster. Independent Panel Report at 33. Verizon agrees with the Independent Panel's recommendation that the Commission is the federal agency best suited to collect disaster-related outage reports.

Verizon and many other carriers have been actively involved in recent discussions with staff from the Commission's Office of Engineering and Technology, Network Technology Division, regarding a voluntary program for reporting disaster-related outages. These discussions have addressed a wide range of issues related to a voluntary emergency outage reporting system, including reporting frequency, the critical data to be reported, the creation of reporting templates, and the confidential treatment of reports. Traditionally, the NCC has coordinated such reporting, and Verizon has supported those efforts as well.

Verizon understands that the industry supports the voluntary reporting program and has reached broad agreement on a majority of the parameters of a voluntary emergency outage reporting system. This voluntary process, which is already underway, is efficient and will likely result in implementation of a reporting system more quickly than if it were not voluntary. The Commission should therefore allow this voluntary industry process to continue so that the industry and the Office of Engineering and Technology can continue to work cooperatively toward developing the specifications of the voluntary emergency outage reporting system, rather than attempting to create an emergency outage reporting system through the rulemaking process.

B. Recovery Coordination

The Independent Panel recommended that the Commission improve disaster recovery coordination in several areas. These include the national credentialing of communications

workers responding to a disaster; affording such workers "first responder" status under the Stafford Act; improved coordination at state, local, and regional Emergency Operations Centers; better promotion of the various federal telecommunications programs managed by the NCS; broadening the membership of the NCC to include all communications technologies; and various improvements to the Commission's website. These proposals are addressed below.

National Credentialing. The Independent Panel supported the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee's recommendation for a national standard for credentialing telecommunications repair workers and added that such a standard should be broadened to include all communications repair workers. *Id.* at 34. In general, Verizon supports a national standard for credentialing that would be recognized by all entities involved in disaster response, including the various federal agencies (e.g., FCC, FBI, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security), state organizations (e.g., state police, National Guard), and local entities (e.g., local law enforcement, fire and rescue). These credentials should be issued by an appropriate government agency and the costs of such a credentialing program should be borne by the government, rather than private industry. This uniform national credential could be carried by telecommunications workers in addition to their employee identification credentials.

The Commission can help with employee credentialing in the short term by encouraging states to follow the procedures established by the State of Georgia. Under that program, a telecommunications repair worker has "first responder" status under Georgia law if he or she (1) can produce a valid company identification card; (2) displays a first responder "hang tag" issued by Georgia, similar to those used by certain drivers to access parking spaces for disabled persons; and (3) is driving a company vehicle. Adoption of such a credentialing procedure would, in the short term, allow the employees of Verizon and other telecommunications

providers to move seamlessly across all states in an affected region without the difficulties of different credentialing procedures in each state. The National Communications System is currently working with other states directly through NARUC to expand the credentialing agreement reached in Georgia.

Verizon also supports the use of the incident management system within the private sector. The National Incident Management System was developed by the Department of Homeland Security. It provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents. NCC participants, including Verizon, acknowledge and (for EOC operations) follow the National Incident Management System structure. But the use of National Incident Management System should be voluntary and should not be a prerequisite to receiving credentials as an emergency telecommunications repair worker.

Emergency Responder Status under the Stafford Act. The Independent Panel recommended that communications repair workers be afforded emergency responder status under the Stafford Act. Verizon strongly supports this recommendation.

Designation as "emergency responders" would allow communications providers such as Verizon to receive certain critical assistance from the federal government. For example, such status would provide Verizon's repair workers with security and transport to areas affected by a disaster so that network repairs can be made. During last year's hurricanes, repair workers were denied access to affected networks and their components because they did not have the appropriate status under the Stafford Act. This delayed restoration of services and placed repair workers at risk while they worked to restore telecommunications services.

Making this change would not require an amendment to the Stafford Act. Indeed, in March 2006, the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee reported to the President that the Executive Branch could issue guidance and take other immediate measures to ensure that the term "Emergency Responder (Private Sector)" under the Stafford Act includes telecommunications infrastructure providers. Such a designation ensures certain critical non-monetary federal assistance, including accessing restricted areas, obtaining fuel, water, power, billeting, and workforce and asset security. *See* Attach. F (Letter of the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee to the President (March 1, 2006)).

Currently, there is a requirement that responders complete a National Incident Management System training course to receive emergency responder status. Verizon recommends that this requirement be dropped for all private sector emergency responders because they already receive comparable training that is tailored to their specific industry.

In addition, Verizon's employees are trained and equipped to work on the equipment and facilities in Verizon's network and to implement Verizon's disaster response plans. Verizon therefore recommends that its employees remain under its supervision only and not be placed under the control of the incident commander unless their physical security is threatened. In addition, Verizon employees should not be managed or directed by non-Verizon officials to repair the facilities of other carriers without authorization from Verizon. Verizon can determine whether specific employees are sufficiently trained and equipped to work on other carrier's network equipment and can provide authorization in appropriate circumstances. In short, each provider should direct the disaster response and recovery activities of its own employees.

State/Regional Coordination. The Independent Panel recommended improved communication and coordination among federal, state, and regional authorities, and Verizon

agrees with this recommendation. Such coordination should also establish a clear chain of command within the federal and state governments, so that providers can effectively and efficiently work to restore networks.

After a disaster, the NCC serves as a national, centralized focal point for the restoration of communications in the disaster area. Verizon supports strong coordination between the NCC and other federal, state, and local officials. Verizon also supports periodic meetings between local, state, federal, and private sector emergency response personnel. The Regional exercises run by the National Communications System discussed above represent an effort to bring all of these groups together within the communications industry. Federal, state, and local officials should have the opportunity to participate in these and other coordination meetings together with the private sector.

Existing Communications Technologies. The Independent Panel recommended better promotion of the various federal telecommunications initiatives managed by the NCS, such as the Communications Resource Information Sharing Initiative, the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service, the Wireless Priority Service, and the Telecommunications Service Priority ("TSP") Program, which were discussed above. *See supra* Section III. Verizon supports these initiatives and agrees with the Independent Panel that the Commission should do more to promote their use.

Verizon supports broadening the membership of NCC and promoting the use of the NCC by all carriers and government as the central point where critical national security and emergency preparedness communications issues can be addressed. The NCC provides a "total communications" view and response, not just one company's perspective.

As explained above, Verizon does not support providing contact information on a website. Such open availability of contact information can lead to a deluge of calls to individuals in the midst of responding to a disaster and can interfere with their disaster response activities. The NCC Watch Center already maintains specific contact information for the individuals representing the specific companies and their alternates and provides an important screening function to ensure that individuals are contacted in appropriate circumstances.

Finally, the Commission could take additional action to ensure that recovery efforts occur more effectively and efficiently. For example, although the electric utilities are generally not subject to FCC jurisdiction in the provision of electricity to the public, Verizon recommends that the Commission encourage the Department of Energy to establish a priority electricity restoration program for telecommunications providers and their services similar to the TSP Program. Further, the Commission should encourage vendors who provide critical response and recovery equipment (such as generators) and materials (such as diesel fuel) in affected areas to establish a mechanism that ensures that such equipment and materials are available to telecommunications providers in that area on a priority basis.

C. First Responder Communications

Verizon agrees with many of the Independent Panel's recommendations concerning first responder communications, including pre-positioning of emergency equipment by state and local officials, interoperability of first responder communications, and improving 911 services.

Equipment and Inventory. The Independent Panel recommended that the state and local governments maintain a cache of equipment and associated components that would be needed "to immediately restore existing public safety communications within hours of a disaster." Independent Panel Report at 37. The Independent Panel also recommended training state and

local employees on proper use of that equipment and the maintenance of a database of state and local public safety system information.

Verizon supports efforts by state and local governments to maintain a cache of emergency backup equipment, including satellite telephone equipment, for emergency communications. Verizon also recommends the establishment of an alternate Public Service Answering Point ("PSAP") center that would be equipped with a number of phones provisioned in a hunt group based on expected call load. This center should be equipped with lines terminated in a telephone central office that is in a different locality; it should not be the local central office serving the PSAP. The alternate PSAP should be equipped with the necessary radio communications to enable communication with the appropriate first responder groups that handle 911 issues.

In order to make effective use of an alternate PSAP center, state and local governments need the ability to reroute traffic from the PSAP in the disaster area to the alternate PSAP center. One way to do so is to equip all PSAPs with a network control modem device. This unit allows PSAP management to transfer traffic to an alternate PSAP center by using a secure dial-up access procedure from a remote site if there is an outage at the primary PSAP. This procedure would route all 911 calls from the affected PSAP to the alternate PSAP.

Verizon suggests that procedures for the use of the alternate PSAP to handle 911 calls be specified in the local government's emergency services disaster recovery plan. A funding source, dedicated to emergency services, must to be identified to support the establishment of the alternate PSAP answering center. The Commission should also request input on this proposal from the National Emergency Number Association, the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, and other interested organizations.

In response to the Independent Panel's proposal concerning training, in Verizon's view, training on all aspects of the administration, provisioning, and implementation of the alternate PSAP answering center must be part of the local government's emergency service disaster recovery plan. This training should be conducted on a regular basis using mock emergencies to ensure that local government employees and Verizon employees are ready and able to coordinate their activities. Verizon also suggests that all PSAPs have an up-to-date disaster recovery plan and that training be carried out on a regular basis for all PSAP personnel.

In response to the recommendation concerning the maintenance of a database, Verizon does not oppose the NCC's efforts to maintain a database of state public safety contacts and information. *Id.* at 37. If such a national database were created, there should be a formal process to ensure that the database is accurate and up-to-date. Procedures would be required to ensure that access to the database is restricted to key personnel with a legitimate "need to know" the information. In addition, access should be based on a permission level, so that local or state authorities can access only the information relevant to their geographic area.

In considering these recommendations, the Commission should be aware that many PSAPs already have as part of their disaster recovery plan a local database of hardware inventory, model numbers, software, trunks, and related circuit identification information.

E-911 and PSAP Issues. The Independent Panel recommended that the Commission encourage the implementation of certain voluntary best practices developed by the NRIC VI Council. *See supra* Section II. These recommendations, and Verizon's responses to them, are discussed below.

The Independent Panel recommended that service providers and network operators place and maintain 911 circuits over diverse interoffice transport facilities and that they ensure the

availability of emergency back-up power capabilities (located on-site, when appropriate). Independent Panel Report at 39. Verizon agrees that, if possible, 911 circuits should be maintained over diverse landline facilities, and Verizon provisions its 911 circuits in this manner. Verizon is currently working with the Commission and other carriers on the Network Reliability Steering Committee to examine 911 and E911 outages to determine how to enhance the reliability of 911 services.

Verizon does not, however, provide total facility diversity because of network infrastructure limitations. At the discretion of the PSAP, Verizon will provide additional diversity options that include landline network infrastructure additions and/or upgrades for 911 diversity on an Individual Case Basis at additional charges to the PSAP.

Verizon agrees that all PSAPs should be equipped with a back-up power supply as a fundamental requirement of the PSAP disaster recovery plan.

The Independent Panel recommended that network operators deploy dual service 911 selective router architectures as a means for eliminating single points of failure. *Id.* Dual selective routing is a "mated" or matched tandem architecture and is Verizon's recommended 911 service offering. In fact, most PSAPs today in high population areas of Verizon's service territory are served by dual selective routing architecture. In some geographic locations, it is the only architecture Verizon provides for 911 service. In other geographic locations, dual selective routing is provided as an optional 911 service. For locations where it is optional, Verizon has advised all PSAPs of the availability and increased reliability of dual selective routing.

The Independent Panel recommended that network operators, service providers, equipment suppliers, and public safety authorities establish alternative methods of communication for critical personnel. Verizon agrees that PSAPs should have an alternate

means of communication for critical personnel. This should be clarified in the disaster recovery plan to include wireless phones, radio, VoIP, or any other means to communicate when there is an interruption in normal communications. This alternate means of communication should exist both within and among PSAPs. The Commission should coordinate with the NCC so that the NCC is the single point to establish and maintain information about alternative communication methods.

The Independent Panel recommended the designation of a secondary back-up PSAP that is more than 200 miles away to answer calls when the primary and secondary PSAPs are disabled. Verizon recommends that the secondary back-up PSAP be located at the maximum feasible distance from the Primary PSAP by taking into account radio interoperability, the availability of operating support systems such as computer aided dispatch and call answering equipment, and the logistics for transporting and staffing PSAP personnel familiar with the geographic area of the disaster. State and local governments are best able to make such determinations and should not be constrained by a specific distance requirement.

Finally, Verizon supports efforts by the Commission to educate emergency medical personnel on priority services (such as the GETS, WPS, and TSP programs discussed above), including treating such personnel as public safety personnel under the Stafford Act and providing funding to such personnel under state grant programs. In Verizon's view, better knowledge of these services would likely improve disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

D. Emergency Communications to the Public

The Independent Panel's recommendations concerning emergency communications to the public touch directly and indirectly on the issues and record developed in the Commission's pending Emergency Alert System ("EAS") docket. *See Review of the Emergency Alert System,*

EB Docket No. 04-296, DA 05-191. In the *Hurricane Katrina NPRM*, the Commission itself specifically stated that solving the technical challenges of providing EAS to persons with hearing or vision disabilities and persons who do not speak English "is the subject of the Commission's ongoing EAS rulemaking proceeding." *Hurricane Katrina NPRM* ¶ 18. And the Commission confirmed that it expects to address "these and related issues in that proceeding." *Id.* Verizon agrees with the Commission that the ongoing EAS proceeding is the more appropriate docket to address the EAS and other disability-related issues raised in the *Hurricane Katrina NPRM.*

V. CONCLUSION

Verizon commends the Independent Panel's Report and supports the Commission's efforts to address the disaster preparedness concerns in that Report. Verizon recommends that the Commission take certain steps right away to improve disaster response and recovery, including eliminating the one-year time limit on Special Temporary Authorities and waivers for disaster planning and response; adopting an expedited procedure for temporary spectrum leases; promoting the categorization of telecommunications repair workers as emergency responders under the Stafford Act; chartering the NRIC VIII Council; improving outage monitoring; and encouraging the development of streamlined credentialing procedures.

The Commission should not, however, adopt recommendations in areas already addressed by the NCC, the NRIC, or telecommunications providers such as Verizon.

Respectfully submitted,

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