As Tropical Storm Zeta Approaches, AT&T Prepares Network, Offers Tips to Help Residents Stay Connected

NEW ORLEANS, Oct. 26, 2020 -- AT&T* has initiated its storm preparedness plan as Tropical Store Zeta tracks toward the Gulf Coast, with landfall expected near New Orleans.

Our network preparations include:

- Topping off generators with fuel at our cell sites and switch facilities.
- Testing high-capacity back-up batteries at cell sites.
- Protecting our physical facilities against flooding.
- Staging emergency response and network recovery equipment in strategic locations for quick deployment following the storm.
- Staging dedicated FirstNet deployable network assets for use by public safety agencies on FirstNet as needed. FirstNet is the nation's dedicated network for first responders.

"We know our customers need to stay connected while preparing for and in the aftermath of tropical storms and hurricanes," said Tony Mokry, AT&T Gulf States vice president/general manager. "Our teams in the Gulf work year-round to help ensure our networks are ready for these types of storms. And like many of our neighbors, we're taking some extra preparation measures as the storm approaches Louisiana and Mississippi."

AT&T encourages customers and residents in areas potentially affected by the storm to prepare as well. Below are communication tips to help you stay connected.

- **Save your smartphone's battery life**. In case of a power outage, extend your device's battery life by putting it in power-save mode, turning off Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, deleting apps, or putting your phone in Airplane Mode. This may prevent you from using certain features but will ultimately save battery power.
- **Keep your mobile devices charged.** Be sure to have another way to charge your smartphone if the power goes out.
- **Keep your mobile devices dry.** Mobile phones can be a critical lifeline during a storm. To protect yours, store it in a water-resistant case, floating waterproof case or plastic bag. A car charger or back-up battery pack can come in handy. If you have multiple devices to keep charged, consider a multi-port back-up battery pack.
- **Back up important information and protect vital documents.** Back up insurance papers, medical information and the like to the Cloud or your computer. With cloud storage, you can access your data from any connected device.

- **Have a family communications plan.** Choose someone out of the area as a central contact in case your family is separated. Most importantly, practice your emergency plan in advance.
- **Store emergency contacts in your mobile phone.** Numbers should include the police department, fire station, hospital, and family members.
- **Forward your home number to your mobile number in the event of an evacuation.** Because call forwarding is based out of the telephone central office, you will get calls from your landline phone even if your local telephone service is down. If the central office is not operational, services like voicemail and call forwarding may be useful.
- **Track the storm on your mobile device.** If you lose power at your home during a storm, you can use your mobile device to access local weather reports.
- **Take advantage of the camera on your smartphone.** Be sure to use the camera on your phone to take, store and send photos and video clips of damage to your insurance company.
- **Use location-based technology.** These services can help you find evacuation routes and track a lost family member's mobile phone.
- **Be prepared for high call volume and keep non-emergency calls to a minimum.** If there is severe weather, chances are many people will be attempting to place calls at the same time. The increased calling volume may create network congestion. If you get a "fast busy" signal on your wireless phone or a slow dial tone on your landline phone, hang up, wait several seconds and then try again.
- **Try texting vs. calling.** Because it requires fewer network resources, text messages may go through more quickly than voice calls.

AT&T Preparations
AT&T's Network Disaster Recovery (NDR) program is one of the largest in the country. Our NDR fleet consists of more than 320 pieces of response equipment readied for quick deployment, including:

- Mobile cell sites and mobile command centers
- Cell on Wings (or Flying COWs)
- Drones for assessing cell site damage
- Emergency communications vehicles
- A self-sufficient base camp. The camp is complete with sleeping tents, bathrooms, kitchen, laundry facilities, on-site nurse and meals ready to eat (MREs).
- Hazmat equipment and supplies
- Technology and support trailers to provide infrastructure support and mobile heating ventilation and air conditioning
- Internal and external resources for initial assessment and recovery efforts

FirstNet: Prioritizing first responder communications

We know how critical communications are to rescue and recovery efforts. That's why we partnered with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government – to deliver the FirstNet network to public safety. FirstNet gives first responders the unthrottled connectivity they need, no matter the emergency:

- **Priority & Preemption:** In emergencies and disasters, commercial networks can quickly become congested. That's why FirstNet is the only nationwide network that gives first responders *always-on* priority and preemption. It puts them at the front of the "communications line," prioritizing their access to the network.

- **Greater Command & Control:** Public safety agencies have access to a fleet of 76 dedicated mobile cell sites that link to FirstNet via satellite and do not rely on commercial power availability. New this storm season, there's a giant addition to the FirstNet disaster response arsenal: FirstNet One – an approximately 55-foot aerostat, more commonly known as a blimp. And, to give first responders greater command and control of their network, the FirstNet Response Operations Program aligns with the National Incident Management System to better guide the deployment of these assets.

- **Enhanced Coverage and Capacity:** We've also deployed FirstNet Band 14 spectrum across 700+ markets nationwide. This includes every major city coast-to-coast, rural towns and tribal areas. Band 14 is nationwide, high-quality spectrum set aside by the U.S. government specifically for FirstNet. We refer to it as public safety's VIP lane- during an emergency, this band can be cleared and locked just for FirstNet subscribers. That means only those on FirstNet will be able to access that spectrum, further elevating their connected experience and emergency response. When not in use by FirstNet subscribers, AT&T customers can also enjoy Band 14's added coverage and capacity.

*About AT&T Communications

We help family, friends and neighbors connect in meaningful ways every day. From the first phone call 140+ years ago to mobile video streaming, we innovate to improve lives. We have the nation's fastest wireless network.** And according to America's biggest test, we have the nation's best wireless network.*** We're building FirstNet® just for first responders and creating next-generation mobile 5G. With a range of TV and video products, we deliver entertainment people love to talk about. Our smart, highly secure solutions serve nearly 3 million global businesses – nearly all of the Fortune 1000. And worldwide, our spirit of service drives employees to give back to their communities.

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