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FCC Launches Disaster Reporting System

*By Patrick Murck
murck@fhhlaw.com
703-812-0476*

The FCC recently launched a new Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS) through its Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. The web-based system is available for communications providers serving areas affected by a disaster to voluntarily provide information about network infrastructure and outages.

The DIRS program is not to be confused with the Network Outage Reporting System (NORS), which is also administered by the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. The information provided through DIRS is meant to be used by the government to help coordinate disaster response and recovery efforts. Carriers are being asked to report disaster-related outages through DIRS as opposed to the non-disaster-related service interruptions typically reported through NORS.

DIRS was created following the recommendations of the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks and to help support the Department of Homeland Security's National Communications System. Communications providers of all stripes are asked to participate, be they cellular, landline or broadcasters. Any information that is submitted through DIRS is presumptively considered confidential information and won't be released to the public.

Providers are asked to provide a point of contact within their organization and to report, using the DIRS system, on the status of their networks, restoration efforts, if the network has power and whether there is access to fuel if a generator is in use. The FCC's manual for using DIRS is available here: http://www.fcc.gov/pshs/disaster/disaster_manual.pdf.