Connect to People

How people use technology matters. Knowing the risks of texting while driving or how to use the Internet safely at any age can help us make better choices. Learn how we're helping to meet the diverse needs of technology consumers and fostering a workplace that supports all employees.
Disaster Response

Materiality Assessment Topics: Network reliability; Products and services that enable social and environmental benefit

Issue Summary

As a member of local and global communities, a company’s resources can play an important role in disaster relief efforts. Information and communication technology companies have the added task of maintaining communications to and from impacted areas.

Our Position

When disaster strikes, our company and our employees assist victims and affected communities through business continuity planning, network preparedness, disaster response, corporate giving, employee support and volunteerism.

Data Highlights

2017 Key Performance Indicators

- Investment in Network Disaster Recovery Program—cumulative since 1992: $650M+
- Working hours spent on Network Disaster Recovery field exercises—cumulative since 1992: 150,000+

Our Action

The AT&T Business Continuity Management Program includes management disciplines, processes and techniques to support our essential business processes in the event of a significant business disruption. AT&T has a team of industry-leading, certified and experienced business continuity experts engaged in our internal business continuity management program. This team requires that key business processes have documented business continuity plans that are updated and exercised on a predetermined schedule. The AT&T Business Continuity Management Program is certified to the international business continuity standard, ISO 22301:2012. It is also aligned with the Disaster Recovery Institute International (DRII)
Professional Practices, Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guidelines, Department of Homeland Security National Incident Management System and ISO 31000. Our alignment with these standards demonstrates our ability to resume business operations and delivery of customer service in the vital hours and days after a disaster. In the event of a disaster or other emergency, we implement procedures to quickly restore network functionality, field customer inquiries and bring service to the communities in which we operate.

To learn more about our business continuity preparedness, read our program handbook.

Network Preparedness

Even before disaster strikes, AT&T takes steps to prepare network infrastructure. Our network team builds all cell sites—including those in disaster-prone areas—to meet or exceed state structural standards. Regular analysis is conducted to help ensure our cell sites can withstand earthquake loads, wind, ice and other environmental factors. Based on analysis by professional engineers, upgrades or modifications are completed to maintain safe, reliable tower capacity and to meet or exceed all building codes. We also deploy high-capacity battery backup to our cell sites, which allows them to remain in service in the event of a power loss. To prepare our network for natural disasters, we regularly test the high-capacity backup batteries located at every site and take steps to ensure fixed generators are fueled on a regular basis.

As an information technology and communications company, we have a unique role to play in disaster preparedness and response in the event the network is damaged. The ability to call first responders or check in with family members after a disaster is of critical importance. This is one of the many reasons why we have invested billions of dollars in our networks—to help prepare for natural disasters. Network investments improve network reliability every day, including during and after disasters. Through our Network Disaster Recovery (NDR) organization, we are committed to on-the-ground testing. We have conducted 77 full-scale recovery exercises in the field, which are vital to testing our equipment and abilities. In May 2017, NDR conducted a full technology recovery drill in San Diego. In addition, NDR’s Special Operations (hazmat) team conducted a joint exercise with the Houston Fire Department in April 2017 and with the Lake County Hazardous Materials Team in Willoughby, Ohio in August 2017. These drills help local and regional first responders understand NDR’s role and abilities, and they maintain the readiness of the team and its equipment.

AT&T proactively monitors potential nature-related threats to our network, employees and communities through our Weather Operations Center. These exercises, and the AT&T Weather Operations Center capabilities, help enable us to minimize damages and mobilize our response more quickly.

In addition to our efforts to prepare our network for potential disasters, we also work to support first responders who need reliable means of communication during these events. In 2017, the
First Responder Network Authority selected AT&T to build and manage the first nationwide broadband platform dedicated to America’s first responders and those who support them. When a significant public safety crisis happens, commercial networks can quickly become congested, making it difficult for first responders to communicate, coordinate and do their jobs. Furthermore, first responders currently use more than 10,000 different networks for voice communications. These networks often do not interoperate, which can severely limit first responders’ ability to communicate with each other when responding to an incident. Through this new public-private partnership, AT&T will deliver a dedicated, interoperable platform and ecosystem that will give first responder users access to the technology they have asked for to better communicate and collaborate across agencies and jurisdictions—local, state and national.

To learn more about network preparedness, read our Network Architecture and Reliability issue brief.

Network Response & Technology

Through our NDR program, we provide critical resources to help ensure the flow of both wireless and wired communications during times of need, all backed by centralized command and control—designed to optimize effectiveness and efficiency. We have invested more than $650 million in our NDR program since 1992, an amount that covers specially trained managers, engineers and technicians from across the United States, as well as a fleet of more than 290 self-contained equipment trailers and support vehicles.

When disaster strikes, our employees work around the clock to keep the network up and running. In 2017, we deployed to Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico to support restoration efforts following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. We also provided wildfire support in California, Washington and Nevada this past year. To learn more about how AT&T provides network disaster recovery and business continuity services to offer relief during disasters, visit AT&T Vital Connections.

In addition to traditional solutions, we also are using innovative methods to support disaster recovery. In Puerto Rico, we deployed our Flying Cell On Wings (COW) drone and collaborated with Google’s Project Loon to provide data, voice and text services to customers and disaster recovery teams.

A Flying COW is essentially a cell site on a drone that, once airborne, provides LTE wireless coverage from the sky to a designated area on the ground. Our drone in Puerto Rico carried gigabytes of data as well as thousands of calls and texts. This was the first time an LTE cell site on a drone was successfully deployed to connect residents after a disaster. As we continue to test this technology, we believe that in the future, drones may serve as a potential solution for
providing wireless coverage in emergency situations that require a rapid response. To learn more about our Flying COW, visit The Policy Forum.

We also offer products and services to assist government agencies when disaster strikes. Following Hurricane Irma, AT&T worked with public-safety officials to support their response and recovery efforts by prioritizing communications for more than 15,000 personnel with AT&T Dynamic Traffic Management. Disasters often require collaboration among state and local governments to help responding agencies maintain an understanding of rapidly developing news and events. AT&T Telepresence Solution® connects physically separated individuals across a building, city, state or nation, serving as the medium for planning, response and recovery actions. To support public-safety efforts, such as disaster and pandemic response or carrying out essential training and events, telepresence allows individuals to see eye-to-eye when physical face-to-face communication is not possible. For more information, visit State and Local Government Solutions.

To see the rest of our disaster response work in action, visit AT&T Vital Connections.

Employee Action & Corporate Giving

Maintaining the reliability of our network is only part of our disaster response strategy. In 2017, our Employee Disaster Relief Fund granted $2.4 million to more than 3,000 AT&T employees across the U.S. who were impacted by wildfires, flooding and hurricanes in California, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In 2017, our corporate and foundation disaster relief giving totaled more than $4 million and provided support for the American Red Cross, Redwood Credit Union Community Fund, United Way of Sonoma County, Team Rubicon, Greater Houston Community Fund, Juntos y Unidos in Puerto Rico and Volunteer Florida. These organizations supported victims and communities affected by disasters as diverse as tornadoes; Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria; the Las Vegas concert shooting; and multiple wildfires in California.

AT&T is also funding Team Rubicon as it builds out 20 Crisis Readiness Units across 8 key U.S. cities that will result in 2,000 trained and qualified military/veteran and civilian volunteers to assist in disaster relief efforts following tornadoes, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters in impacted communities.

Internationally, AT&T supported Mexico earthquake relief through Centro Nacional de Apoyo para Contingencias Epidemiológicas y Desastres, A. C., (CENACED), an international organization headquartered in Mexico that is focused on temporary emergency housing and long-term restoration efforts for families impacted by disasters. Our funding of Télécoms Sans Frontières supports international emergency telecommunications services in areas impacted
by natural disasters and enables affected populations and relief workers to connect to critical resources.

AT&T is also a member of the Red Cross Disaster Responder Program, which ensures the Red Cross is on site immediately following a disaster and has the resources to assist those in need.

In 2017, we waived fees and provided credits to offer free data, calls and text messages for some customers affected by natural disasters. These included Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, earthquakes in Mexico and the Middle East, and wildfires in California.
WHEN DISASTER STRIKES
AT&T NETWORK DISASTER RECOVERY (NDR)

AT&T's commitment to our customers doesn't stop when a natural or a man-made disaster occurs. The mission of the Network Disaster Recovery (NDR) Team is to recover AT&T voice and data service network elements to an area affected by a disaster.

THE NUMBERS:

- 95 TECHNOLOGY RECOVERY SEMI TRAILERS
- 200 ADDITIONAL NDR EQUIPMENT PIECES
- 30 SATELLITE COLTS* & ECVS*
- 150K WORKING HOURS DEVOTED TO RECOVERY EXERCISES
- 150+ RECOVERY TEAM MEMBERS
- $650M+ INVESTMENT

THE SET-UP: