

## **STATEMENT OF DAVID BOGATY**

### **CHAIRMAN AND CEO, WORLDNET TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

First of all thank you Commissioner Starks and staff for taking the time to visit Puerto Rico. It further demonstrates your support and respect for the people of the Island and it's appreciated. Thank you also for the opportunity to testify today on WorldNet's and Puerto Rico's preparedness for a future state of emergency.

To begin with, before Hurricane Maria I believed WorldNet was as prepared as we could reasonably be. However, we, like most companies, and government, learned that that was a false sense of security. The first few hours after it hit were spent just trying to process the extent of the devastation. The next months were tireless days and nights spent rebuilding.

Since then we have taken the following steps to improve our resilience and preparedness for a future natural disaster:

- We have built a redundant central office.
- We are in the process of buying a second generator.
- We have become a sat phone vendor and have distributed sat phones to our key employees.
- One key engineer has a satellite dish installed at his home as well.
- We have built a separate offsite disaster recovery area for us and several customers.
- We developed and implemented an employee information system to support them and notify the ones that can come to work to report
- Other plans have been delayed because we never collected our insurance claim. The insurance company went bankrupt.

Before I move on to what I think could be done to improve resiliency and restoration in the future, I want to take a moment to describe my experience of the biggest breakdowns that occurred.

- Nobody knew who was in charge and there was no plan to put into effect to reestablish the whole interconnected network.
  - Government and companies discussed and bickered for weeks before an incomplete plan was finally developed.
  - Each company was buried in efforts to reestablish their own network. We each had our own set of priorities (Re) implementing carrier to carrier interconnection, and, addressing shared network customers was a different priority for each.
  - Voluntary carrier cooperation to reestablish joint critical customer was inconsistent.
  - Acquiring diesel to keep generators working, security to keep generator and fuel from being stolen, and gas to refuel our fleets, was exhausting and delayed implementation significantly.

- And finally, lack of information and timely reparations by PREPA slowed it even further.

Which leads me to my suggestions for improvement. First, I recommend exercising federal authority to compel from companies appropriate information sharing, and actions based upon that information, designed to reestablish a functional Island wide communications network as soon as possible. Private companies need incentive to operate in ways required to help achieve a communal goal but that may hurt their investors.

Second, I would again exercise federal authority and resources to develop a manual of priorities and actions for local governments. Experience from all jurisdictions could be used. This would provide a necessary base for each local government to customize their own plan. And it would help avoid restoration plans being bogged down in the morass of local politics, as they were here.

I want to acknowledge that the local regulatory board worked tirelessly for the carriers and for the community good, but I believe they need more support and authority in these extraordinary times.

The limited time here today only permits me to speak in generalities but I would be happy to share more details at a later time. Thank you again for the opportunity to express my opinions.