



# GULF OIL SPILL CREATES COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGE

## FROM QUIET FISHING COMMUNITY TO COMMAND CENTER

In the wake of the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, an influx of first responders from the private sector, Coast Guard, National Guard and other federal, state and local government agencies converged on Gulf Coast towns. Rural fishing communities were transformed into swarming hubs of activity. Remote areas that typically experienced little wireless traffic suddenly saw a surge in demand for communications. These very remote areas needed the wireless network capacity and signal strength to handle the surge in voice and data traffic. Government agencies and business customers also needed the right wireless devices, Internet access and services to communicate as they conducted the cleanup.

## READY FOR ACTION: PARTNERING WITH CUSTOMERS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND THE COMMUNITY

Verizon Wireless quickly set up a Wireless Emergency Communications Center at the marina in Venice, Louisiana to enable a steady stream of emergency workers and media to make calls, charge their wireless devices and access the Internet. Noting that many of her customers were from out-of-state and dependent on wireless communications, the Venice marina owner said, "Thank God right now we've got it here." Verizon Wireless provided support for personnel whether or not they were customers. That included a group of state employees who used a Verizon Wireless Mobile Hotspot to send back pictures and reports on the oil spill instead of driving back to their offices.

*"We have years of experience doing this. We've seen storms. We've seen floods. Getting more capacity out here when customers demand it-it's the name of the game."*

- Jeffrey Peacock, Verizon Wireless Technician

*"It made me very proud to see the people I work with, work hard to help the government and the people down here."*

- Verizon Wireless Federal Government Account Executive, Blair Landry,



Verizon Wireless Associate Director, Josh Wilson, a veteran of the company's response to Hurricane Katrina, immediately told his federal government sales team to start reaching out to government agencies to ensure that they had adequate wireless devices, services and coverage. When Account Executive, Blair Landry called a contact at one federal agency and learned his phone was not working, she promptly got in the car and drove an hour to ascertain what the problem was and provide him the right device. "I gave him my phone number and told him that we've helped in other parts of the country; that we want to do more than just sell phones." State and local government sales teams stayed in contact with agencies in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama.

### KEEPING THE SIGNAL STRONG

The Verizon Wireless network was already strong in Louisiana, with \$57 million invested during 2009 alone to strengthen and enhance it in the southern part of the state. To accommodate the surge in usage, local engineers, technicians and support staff—veterans of the area's worst hurricanes and disasters—sprang into action:

- quickly increasing voice and data capacity to sites serving the remote areas of Plaquemines Parish and along the highways leading to Venice, where much of the cleanup was based.
- deploying four portable supplemental cell sites, known as a Cell on Wheels (COWs), to key areas, including Shell Beach and Hopedale in St. Bernard Parish, where boats for oil clean up and surveillance were being launched. The other COWs were deployed to a command center in Lafitte and the Coast Guard Command Center in Grand Chenier.

These network reinforcements were made with input from the sales and network teams who stayed in touch with federal and state agencies to ensure they had adequate coverage. As Blair Landry said, "We didn't worry about a business plan, but how we could service our community and our country."

## THE VERIZON WIRELESS RESPONSE

- SET UP WIRELESS EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER AT VENICE MARINA.
- WORKED WITH LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES TO ACCOMMODATE WIRELESS EQUIPMENT NEEDS.
- ENHANCED VOICE AND DATA COVERAGE IN REMOTE AREAS.
- DEPLOYED 4 PORTABLE CELL SITES TO IMPROVE COVERAGE AND CAPACITY.



**The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the spring of 2010 resulted in an influx of personnel who took part in the cleanup, creating a surge in demand for wireless communications in remote coastal areas.**