Before the

Joint -- Senate Standing Committee on Energy and Telecommunications

Chair: Senator Kevin Parker

Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation

Chair: Senator Todd Kaminsky

Senate Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

Chair: Senator Leroy Comrie

Senate Standing Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs

Chair: Senator John E. Brooks

Senate Standing Committee on Local Government

Chair: Senator James Gaughran

Senate Standing Committee on Cities

Chair: Senator Robert Jackson

Assembly Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

Chair: Assembly Member Amy Paulin

Assembly Standing Committee on Energy

Chair: Assembly Member Michael Cusick

Assembly Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation

Chair: Assembly Member Steve Englebright

Assembly Standing Committee on Governmental Operations

Chair: Assembly Member Kenneth Zebrowski

Assembly Standing Committee on Local Governments

Chair: Assembly Member Fred W. Thiele

Assembly Standing Committee on Cities

Chair: Assembly Member Edward C. Braunstein

Opening Statement of Verizon

August 20, 2020

To the Honorable Committee Chairs, Committee Members, and other distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly. My name is Keefe Clemons, and I'm Vice President for State Regulatory

Affairs for the Verizon service area that includes New York State. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on Verizon's preparation for and response to Tropical Storm Isaias, which struck New York State on August 4, 2020, and left customers without power throughout the Northeast. On August 5th, Governor Cuomo declared a state of emergency in the counties of Bronx, Dutchess, Kings, Nassau, New York, Orange, Putnam, Queens, Richmond, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester. Our comments today will focus on the areas hit hardest by the storm in New York State which include several areas on Long Island and communities in Westchester County.

Verizon prepared for this storm, and its response to it has been urgent and effective. The company has worked speedily and diligently to repair damage to its networks, and to restore the services that we provide (landline telephone, cellphone service, broadband, and cable TV) as soon as possible, once power had been restored.

Background

Verizon's ability to respond to an emergency is no accident. Verizon has well-established practices surrounding Business Continuity and Event Management, and our professionals at all levels are at their best when needed most by our customers. Verizon began tracking then "Hurricane" Isaias on July 31st. At that time, it was off the coast of Florida, and was expected to move northward up the Florida coast.

Consistent with its established practices, in advance of the storm, Verizon took steps to protect its equipment in areas expected to be impacted by the storm, to secure portable assets, and to mobilize the Verizon Response Team, which helps provide support to Public Sector agencies and responds to issues impacting the operation of our wireless network.

By 8 pm on August 2nd, the National Weather Service had downgraded Isaias to a tropical storm as it continued to move along the Southeast Coast. Meanwhile, Verizon continued to monitor its progress and to prepare for its expected arrival in the Northeast. The Tropical storm hit New York State on

August 4th. The storm dumped heavy rain with maximum sustained winds of 65 miles per hour. In its aftermath, more than 870,000 New Yorkers experienced power outages.

Response

The biggest impact on Verizon's ability to deliver service to its customers after the storm was the loss of commercial power at customers' homes, upon which those services depend. Verizon's networks in New York generally held up well. There was some damage in storm-impacted areas that was largely attributable to falling trees, downed telephone poles and service lines. Despite these impacts, Verizon's core wireline facilities were able to continue operating throughout the storm and thereafter. (At the peak of the storm, Verizon had 50 central offices operating on emergency power provided by Verizon generators, with no generator failures.)

While there were some pockets where network congestion arose due to greatly increased usage, overall, Verizon's wireless network remained more than 98% operational. In the New York Metro area, which includes Long Island, New York City, Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties, the wireless network was 95% operational during maximum storm impact. Wireless usage increased substantially due in large part to consumers who were previously using their wired broadband, but who switched to wireless after they lost power. When usage increases, data speeds decrease. Our networks are built to withstand some usage spikes, but we cannot, as a practical matter, build sufficient excess capacity to absorb a sudden tripling of usage. (That would be akin to building six lanes of traffic on the State Thruway when two are normally required in order to handle rush hour traffic).

Following storms such as Isaias that have damaged electrical plant, Verizon is only able to perform repair work on its network in areas where electrical issues have been addressed and the area is safe for our employees to work. While the electric utilities are responsible for the maintenance and restoration of commercial power, Verizon works in close coordination with those companies to repair damage to outside plant such as downed utility poles and service lines, and to make sure that our

communications facilities attached to those poles are restored once new poles are in place. In addition, downed trees or closed roads may at times impede Verizon's ability to access certain areas in order to make necessary repairs, or to deploy portable facilities such as generators.

Where possible, Verizon began its storm restoration efforts immediately after the storm ended. Verizon's operations teams have been working diligently to make necessary repairs and restore service to its customers as quickly as possible. Additional forces were brought in from other areas not impacted by the storm to assist with those efforts.

Since most of our services require commercial power in order to operate, the largest impact on our customers' ability to use our services following the storm was caused by the loss of commercial power. In many instances, once power has been restored to a customer's home following a storm, Verizon's services come back on line without our needing to send a repair technician to a customer's home. To the extent they don't, and the service cannot be restored remotely, Verizon then dispatches a technician to the customer's home to restore service.

Verizon's restoration efforts are ongoing and to date the company has cleared more than 56,500 customer troubles. However, even as power was being restored, a vast majority of our wireless and wireline networks were performing as usual in the Northeast.

Witnesses

I'm joined today by three experienced Verizon leaders with responsibility for Verizon's network operations in the areas most significantly impacted by the storm. Yolanda Stancil is the Vice President of Network and Field Operations with responsibility for New York Metro and Long Island. Paul Sullivan is the Vice President of Network and Field Operations for the Northeast-New York region that includes the Westchester, Rockland, and other Midstate areas. John Gallop is an Executive Director of Network Engineering and Operations for Verizon Wireless. We are available to answer your questions regarding our response to the storm. Thank you.