



North Carolina Telecommunications Industry Association

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Telcos Get Ready for Snow, Ice

Companies offer tips to help customers stay connected with loved ones during winter storms

SANFORD, N.C. – Your local telephone company is getting ready for blustery winter weather. According to the North Carolina Telephone Industry Association (NCTIA), its member companies have invested millions of dollars to prepare their phone networks in the event of severe winter weather. Each year, they make significant infrastructure upgrades to ensure they have the latest telecommunications technologies that can help limit the extent of service interruptions and make it possible to restore service quickly.

“While dependable telephone service is important every day, it is especially critical during times of emergency,” said Carole Woodward, NCTIA executive director. “Our member companies are dedicated to keeping phone lines working during any crisis, including winter storms.”

When winter storms threaten, NCTIA member companies mobilize extra personnel and deploy additional equipment, including auxiliary generators, extensive supplies of telephone cable, utility poles and other service restoration materials. They gas up service vehicles, set up command centers and continually monitor weather forecasts and local transmission facilities. After the storm abates, damage assessment teams inspect landline and wireless networks. Repair crews and support personnel work around the clock.

“NCTIA member companies are committed to restoring your service as quickly as possible after blustery winter weather or any major storm,” Woodward said.

The telcos also assist state, federal and local disaster recovery efforts by providing portable payphones, calling cards, wireless phones and other communications to emergency management authorities and at local shelters, should the need arise.

With winter weather just around the corner, NCTIA is offering tips that can help telephone users stay connected with friends and family when significant amounts of ice or snow strike the Tarheel state.

- You’ll want to have at least one conventional wired phone at home. Traditional wireline phones generally continue to operate during commercial power outages. That’s because your local phone company can power its switching equipment with mobile generators and backup batteries. Cordless phones, on the other hand, need a base that’s plugged into an electric outlet. If the power goes out, cordless phones won’t work.

- Use your phone only for emergency or essential calls. Severe weather strains the availability of telephone circuits, and heavy call volumes can cause slow dial tones. If you pick up your phone and don't get a dial tone right away, hang up and try your call again in a few minutes. Don't jiggle the switch hook because that adds to transmission congestion. Remember, it's important that phone lines remain open for law enforcement, fire, medical, rescue and other emergency personnel. You may have a need to call 911 yourself. NCTIA encourages phone users dialing loved ones to make these contacts as brief as possible. Doing so helps avoid overburdening phone systems, including backup batteries.
- If your wireline phone service is disrupted, contact your local service provider only once to report the outage. After a snow or ice storm, your local phone provider will immediately begin to survey the damage and prioritize the needed repairs.
- Make sure cell phones are charged and available for backup. Remember, wireless networks, too, should be kept open for emergency communications. Keep in mind that interruption of wireline service and commercial power also could affect wireless calls.

NCTIA is a trade organization representing carriers certified by the N.C. Utilities Commission to provide telecommunications services to the citizens of North Carolina. Founded in 1932, the organization advocates for the telecom industry, offers education and training opportunities for its member companies and supports a pro-business environment for growth and economic development across the state.

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