

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES POLICIES OF CABLE, SATELLITE SERVICE PROVIDERS TO PROTECT CONSUMERS IN STORM-DAMAGED AREAS

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced policies of Bright House, Comcast, Dish Network, DirecTV and Charter Communications, to protect consumers who may have lost equipment and services during the recent storms that struck Alabama. The Attorney General commended these companies and urged other such service providers to adopt similar policies to serve the needs of customers in storm-damaged areas.

“I am pleased with the strong positive response by these companies to maintain flexibility in their policies to alleviate further hardship to their customers who suffered from the terrible storms that struck Alabama,” said Attorney General Strange. “I appreciate the prompt and thorough response to address consumers’ needs and concerns. We urge other service providers also to take a responsible stand in resolving issues their customers face in the aftermath of the storms.”

Karen Broach, regional vice president of operations for Bright House, commented on that company’s policies to assist customers in its service areas, which include Elmore and Jefferson counties and the surrounding region.

“The horrific storms that ravaged our state three weeks ago left an unforgiving path of destruction and despair,” said Broach. “We have all been deeply affected by the losses sustained by our neighbors, family and friends. We at Bright House Networks have had many of our team members who have had also had to deal with complete devastation to their homes and properties. In this time of need and rebuilding, it is important for our customers to know what we have done to lend a helping hand.” She provided the following details on Bright House’s response:

- Bright House Networks has proactively credited accounts of customers who experienced a loss of service(s) due to the storms.
- Bright House Networks took the initiative and completed a detailed walk out of the area to identify all known destroyed homes and we suspended their billing.
- This is important for two reasons, one is financial and the second is customer convenience. For example, if a customer subscribes to Bright House Networks Home Phone or High Speed Internet Service, this will preserve the customer’s phone number and email address so they can transfer it to their new residence.
- Suspended customer bills include suspension of equipment charges so customers can make contact with us at a time convenient to them to address their individual needs.
- Bright House Networks will not charge customers for equipment damaged or lost as a result of the storm.



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- Bright House Networks never charges a disconnect fee – no matter what the reason.

Consumers may contact Bright House by calling 1-866-876-1872.

“In addition to the proactive measures to suspend accounts and provide credits, we are doing our part to help the overall community and our local employees,” stated Broach, noting a \$1 million donation made to the American Red Cross toward the disaster relief efforts from the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation on behalf of Bright House Networks and Advance Alabama Publications, which includes the Birmingham News, Huntsville Times and Press-Register in Mobile, al.com, the newspapers’ online affiliate, and the Birmingham Business Journal. The company has set up an assistance fund for its employees in need, and employees from other areas outside of Alabama are working together to collect immediate support to send to their fellow team members and their families.

Comcast Area Vice President Terry Kennedy told about that company’s response. “Comcast customers throughout the Tuscaloosa and Huntsville areas have suffered considerably in the wake of these storms and rebounding from a major disaster like this is not easy,” he said. “At Comcast, our first priority always has been and continues to be our customers. We are thankful to the Attorney General for this opportunity to further make the public aware. To assure that customers are aware of policies around service and equipment, Comcast has notified customers in the Tuscaloosa and Huntsville areas of the following policies:”

- For consumers displaced from their homes due to the storms, their service may be placed on a temporary six-month “hold” status at no cost, which enables those with voice and data services to save their telephone numbers and email addresses.
- Equipment (such as converter boxes and cable modems) that was damaged by the storm may be exchanged at the local Comcast offices at no charge. Consumers should notify Comcast if equipment was lost in the storm and cannot be recovered. Although routine policy requires that a police report or insurance claim be filed on lost equipment, that requirement is waived for six months due to the extreme nature of the extensive storm damage. Customers will not be charged for the exchange or replacement of equipment under these circumstances.
- Customers who lost service will be automatically credited for that period of time. It is not necessary to notify Comcast for this credit, which will appear automatically on customers’ next bills. Customers who still do not have service after their power was restored should contact Comcast.

Consumers may contact Comcast by calling 1-800-COMCAST. The local Tuscaloosa office is located at 1131 Whigham Place. In addition, a temporary office and communications center has been set up at Belk Center, located at 2101 Bowers Park Drive, where local residents may use free high-speed internet and make free local and long-distance calls. The Huntsville office is located at 2047 Max Luther Drive.

DISH Network has similarly announced to provide free replacement equipment and free technician calls, at no additional cost, for loss of service due to the storms. If it is necessary to disconnect service, the company agreed to waive any fees. Consumers may contact DISH Network by calling 1-800-333-3474.

DISH Network provided the following statement about its response: "Taking care of our customers who have been impacted by any disaster, including tornadoes, is our top priority. DISH Network has a disaster policy in place and works with affected customers on a case-by-case basis to determine the best solution. We normally provide several no-cost options for victims to suspend their satellite service, including a pause of service, with no equipment fees."

Ellen Filipiak, Sr. Vice President for Customer Service at DIRECTV, stated, "We join all service providers in Alabama in a sincere expression of sympathy for the people of Alabama who lost loved ones and homes in the terrible storms that hit the state last month. We are working with both our customers and employees in Alabama to help them rebuild as well as reconnect their TV services. And to ease the burden and worry for our customers who were affected by the disaster, we have suspended accounts for those who were without power, offered free service calls and have waived equipment replacement costs and all other fees. More broadly we are also providing support to all victims of the storm through the Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity." Consumers may contact DirecTV by calling 1-800-531-5000.

A statement from Charter Communications comments about the storm crisis and its response. "The tenacity of the April 27 tornados in Alabama came unexpectedly for us all. Charter customers throughout the state have suffered tremendous personal loss and property damage as a result of the storm. Throughout this difficult time, Charter has stood by our customers - and the state of Alabama - as we all work towards recovery," said Kristina Hill, Senior Director of Communications. Charter donated \$50,000 to the American Red Cross in Alabama and its staff has volunteered locally to assist, she said. "Realizing that this is a challenging time for our customers, we have waived fees for equipment that was lost, damaged, or destroyed as a result of the tornado. Charter's customer care team is standing by at 1-888-438-2427 to answer questions and to schedule service calls. "Charter employees live and work throughout Alabama. This is our home, too. We stand by our customers and the state of Alabama as we all work to restore, rebuild, and renew."

Attorney General Strange said that consumers who have concerns or difficulties may contact his Office of Consumer Protection by calling toll-free 1-800-392-5658 or by writing to 501 Washington Avenue, Alabama 36130. Consumers may file a complaint online at www.ago.alabama.gov/consumer_form.cfm.

Attorney General Strange commended the staff of his Consumer Protection Office, noting in particular Assistant Attorney General Noel, chief of consumer protection, and Jeff Sommer, constituent services officer for the Attorney General's Office.