

**STATEMENT OF JOSHUA DESCANT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF REV**

November 17, 2022

Good morning, Chairwoman and Commissioners.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in today's virtual field hearing to discuss the impact of recent natural disasters on communications networks and share on-the-ground experiences that can inform future disaster planning and help promote more resilient networks.

My name is Joshua Descant, Chief Executive Officer of REV and a member of the President's National Infrastructure Advisory Council. REV is a mid-sized communications service provider headquartered in Southeast Louisiana, with 87 years of experience serving the connectivity needs of consumers and businesses in our region. We are also proud and honored to be a trusted communications provider for numerous local governments, sheriff's departments, first responders, wireless providers, and energy sector partners who are vital to national security.

Because of our long history in the gulf region, we have broad experience weathering hurricanes and floods that challenge the resiliency of our networks. I am pleased to share our perspective and lessons learned as we've met many challenges admirably and learned a great deal along the way. Crucial to effective planning and efficient recovery are two factors: communication and coordination. And whether it's across industry sectors, within the communications sector, or when working with the public sector, we need to consider these critical factors with an equitable field of view to include small, medium, and large stakeholders.

First, coordination with our electric utility partners before, during, and after a disaster event is essential. In REV's experience, an even greater concern than the initial loss of connectivity immediately after an event is the secondary outages resulting from damage to the network caused by inadvertent cuts to communications infrastructure – both aerial *and* underground – as electric service is restored. These unintentional activities hamper efforts to restore communications service to the community in general, but also put at risk active emergency communications services that were never affected by the natural disaster in the first place. We have learned that advanced coordination with electric companies to identify critical sites and infrastructure for priority power restoration can facilitate more efficient recovery. The good news is that the communications and power sectors have been collaborating on this and other issues, including emergency operations center coordination, sharing of local contact information, and debris-clearing practices, through venues such as the Cross-Sector Resiliency Forum.

Second, intra-sector cooperation between wireline and wireless providers plays an essential role in keeping networks up and running during disasters, as wireline networks serve as the backbone of our wireless communications. In 2016, for example, Livingston Parish, Louisiana experienced severe flooding following as much as 31 inches of rain in less than 3 days. With the area filled with waist-deep water, we worked with one of our backhaul customers to quickly and nimbly reroute wireless traffic to ensure that residents could make potentially lifesaving calls.

Third, ongoing communication with our government partners is vital to facilitate disaster recovery. As federal, state, and local officials provide updates and work with stakeholders on the ground, smaller and mid-sized communications providers should be included in these discussions. At REV, we work with state officials to ensure that our field teams have access to the same real-time information that larger communications providers and statewide electric companies have—we *all* must be coordinated on restoration efforts.

Another key lesson worth keeping in mind regarding disaster planning and recovery is to expect and prepare for supply chain disruptions. In particular, we've seen how even with advanced planning for fuel supplies, a lack of fuel can hinder our efforts to keep generators running. And the same supply chain issues can arise for network components needed at scale in short order.

In closing, I point out what we all know is the ideal remedy to minimize the risks of climate change to communications: shifting toward proactive rather than reactive strategies for resilient network infrastructure. "Blue skies" or "sunny day" investment will be increasingly important in regions most vulnerable to natural disasters, but there are significant costs associated with this network hardening. However, I believe we have a unique opportunity to leverage the public-private partnership momentum we have established in our industry to reduce the impacts of natural disasters on our communications networks.

Thank you again for the chance to contribute today to this important conversation.