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VI Source: Restoration Progress of viNGN All-Fiber Broadband Continues to Move Quickly

By Source Staff – December 02, 2017

The U.S.V.I. is now seeing tremendous benefits of design and construction of the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (viNGN) through quick restorations and more high-speed Wi-Fi hotspots throughout the Islands.

The viNGN has announced that progress around the recovery and restoration efforts throughout the territory continues to move quickly. Credit for the continuing progress was given to the overall design of the all-fiber broadband network as well as the underground infrastructure that was protected from both the recent hurricanes and related storms which devastated the islands.

Daryl Wade, viNGN senior vice president and CEO, reported that 50 percent of the overall territory infrastructure was back up and running, which included 53 percent of the St. Thomas-St. John and Water Island District, and 46 percent of the St. Croix District. The current viNGN progress and restoration schedule anticipates 75 percent of the broadband network being operational by Dec. 31.

“We continue to make very significant progress with respect to getting connections to the middle-mile back up and running, which has allowed a number of our local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to get their customers reconnected,” said Wade.

The continuing progress of the overall restoration efforts have been aided by the fact that in many areas of the islands’ communities, a majority, including up to 48 percent territory-wide, of the viNGN broadband’s fiber optic network has been built underground and has allowed for a quick turnaround time for reconnecting major parts of the middle-mile infrastructure. Although there are still many existing aerial sections that require reconnecting to the main network, the core sections of the middle mile were operational shortly after the damaging storms.

“We believe that the Virgin Islands are now seeing the tremendous benefits of the design up online and running as well as the increasing number of free, high speed Wi-Fi hotspots that we are continuing to set up throughout the territory,” said viNGN President and CEO Dr. Mark McGibbon.

The viNGN’s continued rate of progress around the overall recovery and restoration has happened despite some significant setbacks of major Internet outages caused by the cutting of cables high up on telephone poles on four separate occasions since Hurricane Maria. These unfortunate fiber cuts, which have come through no fault of viNGN, caused the Internet throughout the St. Thomas-St. John and St. Croix Districts to go offline halting government, business and residential operations.

Although viNGN field engineers reported to these sites within as little as ten minutes to re-splice the fiber optic cables and restore broadband Internet access and services as well as free Wi-Fi hotspots to the territory, the concerns around these fiber cuts remain and increased security and supervision around these vital infrastructure locations are now underway.

On a more positive note, McGibbon pointed out some examples of these latest recovery efforts from the hurricane damage, which include several government agencies such as the V.I. Department of Labor, which viNGN recently reconnected while providing troubleshooting support to the department's overall Internet network.

Additionally, the continued restoration and recovery progress has allowed viNGN to establish very reliable high-speed Wi-Fi hotspot locations and temporary emergency connections throughout the territory for both residential and business use.

ISPs have been able to re-establish connections for their existing customers, including institutions such as the All Saints Cathedral School, which has allowed them to get back up and running. Rebecca Hoffart, who is a Library/media specialist and computer science instructor at All Saints, recently posted on social media: "Keep up the great work viNGN. Here at All Saints we are back to work, educating young Virgin Islanders and so thankful to be online!"

The continually updated recovery and restoration listing as well as the additional Wi-Fi hotspot locations throughout the territory can be found at viNGN's Network Restoration Status page: www.vingn.com/network-restoration-status.