

FCC Chairman Proposes Another Hurricane-Related Exception to the FCC's Rules

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A notable trend under Chairman Pai's leadership has become the FCC's proactive willingness to modify its rules in light of recent natural disasters. As discussed in our recent [podcast](#), the FCC suspended or waived a number of regulatory requirements over the past few weeks for carriers affected by recent major weather events, including rules related to [service outage reporting](#), [number portability](#), [Lifeline](#), and [payment of regulatory fees](#). Today, the Chairman proposed yet another action consistent with this trend.

This time, the Chairman proposed a relief mechanism specifically addressing the impacts of [Hurricane Maria](#) and [Hurricane Irma](#) in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Chairman [proposed](#) making Universal Service Fund ("USF") support immediately available to assist in the recovery efforts. Specifically, the Chairman proposed allocating up to \$76.9 million from the FCC's [high-cost program](#) to affected carriers to repair landline and wireless communications networks on the islands. Affected carriers would have the option of receiving a [lump sum](#) of seven months' worth of USF funding in advance to expedite repair and service restoration efforts. The Chairman noted the urgency of making support available. The Chairman asked his fellow Commissioners to approve the proposal as soon as possible and promised a vote on the issue at the FCC's October meeting if necessary.

The Chairman's proposal underscores the FCC's willingness to develop creative solutions and work with carriers impacted by recent hurricanes to provide support and alleviate regulatory burdens. Consequently, communications providers should carefully assess the impact of recent severe weather events on their operations and consult with counsel about seeking regulatory relief to speed disaster recovery from the FCC as needed.