

Baltimore reporters do some fine TV storytelling on Sandy

Lowell Melser report highlights risk in bearing witness to storm



By David Zurawik

7:46 AM EDT, October 30, 2012

After 14 hours of watching Sandy storm coverage, I am convinced that no one deserves more praise than the reporters and camerapersons on the ground in places like Ocean City.

I know in these snarky, all-you-need-is-irony, postmodern times, lots of folks, including some journalists who should know better, like to make fun of TV reporters standing in high winds and driving rain or snow to report on a storm. I could not disagree more.

The image of a correspondent being pounded by the elements is as crystal-clear an objective correlative for the core role of journalism as I can imagine.

I want someone out there on the edge of the ocean and the tip of the storm bearing witness to the power of nature -- and reporting on the danger the storm portends for the rest of us back in our homes.

Yes, there are wall-to-wall fools and hotdogs working at TV stations. In fact, some might say there are far more of them than serious journalists. But I have not seen many hotdogs or fools out in the storm in my 14 hours of watching Baltimore TV coverage of the storm today. I've mainly seen hardworking folks trying to get the story their editors sent them out to get -- and doing it even as they get soaked by a cold, hard rain and brutal winds.

I have a screengrab up with this post of WBAL's Lowell Melser seconds before a long piece of what looked to be metallic siding came flying toward him and photographer Mac Finney on the streets of Ocean City Monday night. It happened at 7:53 p.m., and was a frightening moment. But Melser just went on with the story after taking a second or two to gather himself.

In fact, he was so intent on explaining the scene on the streets of an abandoned Ocean City, that he went over, picked up the chunk of metal and held it out for the camera and viewers to see.

And Deb Weiner, co-anchoring back in the studio, used the drama of what viewers had just witnessed to deftly make a larger point as they returned from Melser's report.

"And his live shot began with him saying there was little wind," she reminded viewers. Her point was how volatile the situation was and how quickly the wind could pick up and instantly change the game.

Melser and Finney aren't the only ones who should feel proud of the work they are doing as journalists in this storm.

In an earlier post, I praised WBFF's Kathleen Cairns and her videographer (which I am still waiting for someone at Fox45 to name) for their superb work Monday morning in Ocean City. They captured the view from ground level of what it looked like, as waves surged over the banks toward high rise condos. No one did it better all day -- or so far tonight -- than that duo. But there were others.

Derek Valcourt has been doing excellent work all day and night in places like Woodberry under the JFX for WJZ.

I'll have more later, including a post on the outstanding work CNN has been doing up and down the East Coast today and night. Please stop back.

The New York Times

After Hurricane Sandy, People Flock to Radio for Information

By [BEN SISARIO](#)

During the arrival and immediate aftermath of Hurricane Sandy last month, those with power looked to television, the Web and social media for information. But large numbers of people, particularly those in the hardest-hit areas, also turned to the radio.

Arbitron, the radio ratings service, will report on Monday that from 7 p.m. to midnight on Oct. 29, when the storm made landfall in New Jersey, an average of just more than a million people in the broader New York region were listening to the radio during any 15-minute period. That is up 70 percent from the same period the week before. (Besides the five boroughs of New York City, the metropolitan market includes five counties in New York, nine in New Jersey and part of one in Connecticut.)

The audience skyrocketed in coastal areas. Stamford and Norwalk, Conn., had a 367 percent increase during that period; in New Jersey, that figure was up 247 percent in Monmouth County, and up 195 percent in Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties. These numbers increased even though some stations, like WNYC and WINS, [lost their AM frequencies](#) yet continued to broadcast on FM.

In many areas, power was out for days, limiting access to televisions and computers. Joe Puglise, the manager of Clear Channel Communications' radio stations in New York, said that at his home in Monmouth County, which got power back last week, he tuned in on a transistor radio, and that his stations received similar reports from listeners across the region.

At WHTZ-FM, also known as Z100, Clear Channel's popular Top 40 station, D.J.'s whose news reports are usually confined to Lady Gaga sightings took calls from listeners and spent long stretches disseminating information from the authorities. At Clear Channel's building in TriBeCa, the studios had generator power but offices upstairs were dark.

"We haven't had a situation like this in terms of response from listeners since 9/11," Mr. Puglise said.

In some areas, the storm continued to dominate the airwaves well into last week, as Sean Ross, a radio analyst in New Jersey, noted in [an online column](#) for Billboard magazine about WJLK-FM, a Top 40 station on the Jersey Shore. On that station, the storm was a topic for news coverage, listener testimonials, even car dealer and supermarket ads.

The news reports on commercial music stations contrasts with the aftermath of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Mr. Ross said, when many stations simply turned their signals over to affiliated news stations. It also underscores radio's local roots and accessibility in a time of media deluge.

"Radio," Mr. Ross said, "still has an authority that not every tweet has."

FEMA Director: "Listen to Radio."



10-29-2012

As the east coast prepared for Hurricane Sandy on Monday, Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Craig Fugate was interviewed on CBS. Fugate said, "One of the things you don't really think about anymore is having a battery-powered radio or hand-cranked radio to get news from local broadcasters. The Internet may go out, cell phones will be congested, radio is oftentimes the way to get those important messages about what's going on in the local community."

Thanks to the National Association of Broadcasters for sending us the Fugate interview, which you can listen to in its entirety [HERE](#). NAB President and CEO Gordon Smith said yesterday, "I salute the remarkable work of our radio and TV station colleagues now putting themselves in harm's way to keep millions of people safe and informed on the devastation of this deadly storm. As FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate noted* this weekend, in times of emergency there is no more reliable source of information than that coming from local broadcasters. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of those in the path of Hurricane Sandy."

Air Check by Diana Marszalek

Local News Goes Into Sandy Overdrive

By Diana Marszalek

TVNewsCheck, October 29, 2012 8:24 PM EDT

As we move into Day 2 of Hurricane Sandy (now reclassified as Superstorm Sandy), TV news crews from Washington to Boston are working at full force providing wall-to-wall coverage, armed with precautions including ropes to tether satellite masts, cash in case of getting stranded and out-of-market reinforcements.

Having planned for storm coverage since last week — and after ramping it up over the weekend — stations went wall to wall starting at 4 a.m. ET Monday, and as Gannett's WUSA Washington News Director Fred D'Ambrosi puts it: "I'm assuming we are going to be on the air for the next several days and we are prepared to do it."

"Everybody left home on Saturday prepared to be gone for five to seven days," says Michele Butt, news director of Hearst's NBC affiliate WBAL Baltimore. "You don't stop covering the storm just because the sun comes out."

Preparing for the worst and sending crews far and wide, Butt made sure reporters had cash on hand should ATM service go out; booked hotel rooms for them with generators; and gave truck operators ropes to tie down their trucks' dishes.

The station is coordinating coverage with other Hearst stations, as well as with NBC affiliates, she says.

Throughout the day Monday, local TV news operations in Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston ran nonstop storm tracking radar images and news tickers with emergency information and weather updates. Reporters, may pulling 12-hour shifts, stood by coastlines and waterways from Ocean City, Md., to New England poised for potentially destructive surges.

Bracing for widespread power outages cutting off viewers' access to television, stations put particular emphasis on feeding websites, social media and mobile apps — among the most likely sources of information accessible when the power goes out.

By Monday, WUSA's special Hurricane Sandy text alert app had 11,000 subscribers, and its website had 14-15 times more traffic than usual, according to Digital Director Manny Fantis.

In Baltimore, home of Scripps ABC affiliate WMAR, iPhone and Android users can get localized emergency alerts via the group's Storm Shield app. The station also streams live via its mobile app. Between its mobile and website, WBAL expected to have 2 million page views by late Monday.

News directors up and down the East Coast say they are transmitting stories via satellite and microwave trucks and mobile backpacks — and are ready to rely on iPhones should all else fail.

By around 1 p.m. Monday, Hearst's WCVB Boston already had lost power and was running on a generator. The station had enough fuel to last three days and had a fuel company on call to provide more should the power loss go on longer, says News Director Andrew Vrees.

For many stations, covering Sandy is a group effort. The NBC Owned Stations — WRC Washington, WCAU Philadelphia, WNBC New York and WVIT Hartford, Conn. — together covering one of the country's most populated corridors, created a united front of sorts against the storm, sharing resources and content with its corporate news group, including the NBC network, the Weather Channel, MSNBC, CNBC and Telemundo.

Before the storm rolled into town, about a dozen people from Scripps stations in markets including Cincinnati; Indianapolis; Cleveland; Tampa, Fla.; Tulsa, Okla.; and Phoenix arrived at sister station and ABC affiliate WMAR Baltimore to help with coverage and relieve the station's team which is sure to work long and hard this week, says the group's director of news strategy and operations, Jeff Brogan. A crew from Detroit was still enroute on Monday.

All of which is evidence of stations trying to differentiate themselves despite sharing the primary goal of ensuring the safety of residents and reporting teams, news managers say.

Scripps' Washington-based Scripps-Howard News Service, for example, is expected to explore how the hurricane — and the government's response to it — will affect politics, Brogan says.

In New York, WNBC's storm coverage took an unexpected turn when part of a crane collapsed in midtown Manhattan. And a reporter stationed at the New York Harbor in lower Manhattan for a short time turned her attention to a jet skier making the most of storm-related, albeit dangerous, waves.

In Philadelphia, Fox-owned WTXF started the day at 4 a.m. with a special weather-related edition of *Good Day Philadelphia* including interviews with Mayor Michael Nutter, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett and Delaware Governor Jack Markell. That station's team covered the area from New Jersey's shore towns like Atlantic City and Cape May on south.

NBC's WCAU, also in Philadelphia, preempted *NBC Nightly News* on Monday to stick with storm coverage, telling viewers they could watch the network newscast online. That station also started a phone bank with the Red Cross over the weekend and had received 600 calls on Sunday alone, says spokeswoman Kathleen Burke.

In Washington, WRC meteorologists are being broadcast on radio on WAMU-FM and WHUR-FM.

Station in affected markets have been planning coverage strategies for a week. Scripps put its plan into action in the middle of last week, identifying individuals to work as Baltimore reinforcements, Brogan says.

Since Friday, WCAU staff has had meetings twice a day involving not only news personnel and engineers, but financial managers, too. "The scope of this includes making sure the crews have cash in case they need food and the power is down," Burke says. By late Monday, the station had set up cots for its staff.

Even as storm coverage continues, news operations already are preparing for the next step: covering the aftermath. WBAL for example, on Monday, already had its chopper waiting in the wings to survey hurricane damage once it's safe to do so,

Although Baltimore has had its share of major weather events over the last few years — from last year's Hurricane Irene to massive snow falls the year before — this one is different, Butt says: "It's been crazy."



Radio Guides The Public Through Hurricane Sandy, Now The Recovery Begins

HURRICANE SANDY has left behind a trail of sadness with 14 dead in the U.S., one in CANADA and 67 in the CARIBBEAN. Damages are into the many billions of dollars across 13 states and D.C. due to the wind, rain, flooding and trees falling, and there are nearly 6.5 million customers without power -- and in many cases, radio was the sole lifeline of information to the public.

WALL STREET is still closed, as are the NYC subways, schools and many businesses TODAY in the affected states, which are still feeling those strong winds as SANDY moves farther inland.

Today, it's the assessment of damages as radio continues the job of letting the public know what's going on as services return to normal, and the outreach to those in the community displaced by HURRICANE SANDY begins.

Here's what happened in NEW YORK CITY:

Last night CCM+E/NEW YORK went dark at 9:13p (ET). Even iHEARTRADIO.com was down for a while. WKTU morning man PAUL "CUBBY" BRYANT will take you on an eerie journey through the darkened studios [when you click here](#).

And, WKTU afternooner HOLLYWOOD HAMILTON offers an even longer [blackout tour of the CCM+E/NEW YORK studios, and a look outside at the blackout](#).

During the storm, CBS RADIO News WINS-A/NEW YORK lost its AM signal due to technical difficulties and told listeners to tune to the 101.1 FM signal of sister Classic Hits WCBS-F for a simulcast, but moved to the 92.3 FM signal of Top 40 WXRK (92.3 NOW FM) instead.

You can hear what's going on at [CBS RADIO here](#), or at [WINS-A here](#), and [WCBS-A, here](#).

ESPN Sports WEPN-A (ESPN NEW YORK 98.7 FM) and Spanish Sports WEPN-A (ESPN DEPORTES NUEVA YORK 1050 AM)/NEW YORK are still simulcasting sister ABC O&O WABC-TV (ABC7)'s coverage.

WABC-A is up and running and taking calls. You can [hear the stream here](#).

Responding To Sandy In D.C./BALTIMORE

In the D.C./BALTIMORE metros, "It was 'all hands on deck' for Hurricane SANDY," CCM+E/D.C.-BALTIMORE OM MEG STEVENS said. "All nine D.C./BALTIMORE radio stations were able to stay on the air during the entire storm with talent that provided news, traffic and weather information along with just

talking to and sharing listeners stories. It was a long night for our Chief Engineer MATT HOWELL and his team, who put in Herculean efforts to keep us on the air.

"All our morning shows, including The KANE Show (HOT 99.5), ELLIOT in The Morning (DC101), and BOXER (WMZQ), started MONDAY morning setting the scene of what was about to happen and making sure listeners were prepared. Our staff is the best in the business and proved that once again by providing compelling radio throughout the day. It wasn't business as usual, it was all about keeping listeners safe and informed.

"We spent the weekend preparing listeners with practical information about what was to come and then sharing information and talking to our listeners about what was happening in real time both on-air and online," she continued. "Information included interviews with key resources including our partner NBC 4 in WASHINGTON, D.C. Their meteorologists kept us up to date on rapidly deteriorating weather conditions during the storm with live call-ins through the night.

"Great preparation went into our storm coverage, including our digital department creating a Storm Watch page that included Hurricane SANDY preparation and storm path coverage. Over the course of the storm that page evolved and was consistently updated with breaking news, closures, and real time tracking. You'll find HOT 99.5's link [here](#).

CCM+E's digital platforms also helped get the word out. "We were able to deliver the same message to listeners on-air, online and through social media," STEVENS said. "Social media including FACEBOOK, texting and TWITTER were key aspects to dissemination and receiving information from listeners to share with our audiences. The [iHEARTRADIO App](#) was a key way for our listeners to reach any of our stations and keep receiving information while they had no power .

"Our current efforts include updates, clean-up and power restoration information, road closure and flooding information and other travel info. Today is about giving practical information to listener that will affect today. We are also assisting the RED CROSS in provided donation support."

Surviving The Storm On Long Island

What was it like in the eye of the hurricane? COX RADIO Top 40 WBLI/NASSAU-SUFFOLK, NY PD JEREMY RICE told ALL ACCESS, "I spent the night without power with my wife and triplets in our basement for fear of our huge trees crashing on our home and babies. I was still able to make my family a gourmet dinner paired with a nice German beer; the candles were romantic! I listened to 'BLI on an old-fashioned battery/flashlight radio - way cool, way real."

"As this is LONG ISLAND," there is flooding everywhere by the shores," he continued. "I stopped for a woman whose car was hit by a huge tree while driving and then she was slammed by another car, I called 911 and they put me on hold. Even 911 is way backed up. Everyone has a situation right now ... very scary ... 85% of LONG ISLAND is without power ... this is insane!"

At the station, RICE noted, "The market is a mess; we will not be back to normal radio until MONDAY. Morning man JEFFREY JAMESON is stranded in MANHATTAN; his building is flooded. Morning woman DANA DINATO's street is flooded and shut down, but she said, 'Screw that,' and drove through the roadblocks to do 5-11a today ... it was a stellar show! The phoners were amazing."

"Our staff is doing a great job on 106.1 BLI ... FACEBOOK, TWITTER and WBLI.COM ... keeping Long Islanders informed. They're the best they are here no matter what -- 9/11, blizzards, hurricanes -- we are here for LONG ISLAND. People are tough here; they've seen it all."

PHILLY Action

CCM+E/PHILADELPHIA OM BRIAN CHECK told ALL ACCESS, "Listeners from NEW JERSEY were in total shock -- couldn't believe the devastation and flooding in ATLANTIC CITY, and the how the boardwalk was literally ripped away.

"We are now back to normal programming, with news/traffic/weather twice an hour on all stations. Our simulcast was 6ABC TV went from 3p YESTERDAY to 7a this morning (10/30) on WISX (MIX 106)."

Responding Up And Down The East Coast

TOWNSQUARE MEDIA Talk WKXW (NEW JERSEY 101.5)/TRENTON is letting hard-hit CENTRAL NEW JERSEY know what's going and [is streaming, here](#).

CUMULUS N/T WPRO-A (NEWS TALK 630)/PROVIDENCE "will wrap up, as of TONIGHT (10/30) at 9p (ET), will 53 hours of live and local HURRICANE SANDY programming," according to PD CRAIG SCHWALB.

"Coverage of HURRICANE SANDY began SUNDAY and was part of the yearly 'Operation Hurricane' platform that includes wall-to-wall coverage on-air and online. [630WPRO.com](#) included live audio and video streaming, Twitter feeds with updates from local townships, and an INSTAGRAM feed with photos from the impacted SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND area. WPRO's coverage plan also included a team of full time reporters canvassing impacted areas and staffing an auxiliary studio at PROVIDENCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY."

At SINCLAIR/NORFOLK, Alternative WROX (96X) PD JAMES STEELE said, "We were running two updates per hour, each of which wrapped up promoting our sister station Talk WNIS-A had non stop coverage of the storm with the help of multiple members of our clusters staff, including our on staff meteorologist DAVE PARKER. The updates consisted of the latest on the storm, and clips from local and national weather experts and news sources. Our FACEBOOK page was also a major source for the latest on the storm."

GREATER MEDIA VP/Corporate Communications HEIDI RAPHAEL told ALL ACCESS that the stations in the impacted areas "had a back-up plan and were prepared with multiple redundancies to assure the public that there would be uninterrupted content delivery. As a result, there was no down time; if power went down, we were prepared."

Maintaining their live-and-local programming, GREATER MEDIA stations "are providing constant updates to listeners and are partnering with local authorities to provide the latest information," she continued. "We are also encouraging listeners to call-in updates from the ground. Our stations have become the gathering point in our communities for information.

"Our main goal right now is to provide immediate information. There will absolutely be a huge campaign to help the community recover. However, right now people are still being rescued ... we are in 'immediate' mode."

And, ALL ACCESS has heard that WODE and WCTO in the LEHIGH VALLEY are currently off the air.

Yesterday, MAIN STREET BROADCASTING Oldies WLNG/SAG HARBOR, NY continued on-air despite announcers standing ankle deep in a watery control room. Now that's some dedication.

If you have information about your station or cluster about what went on during the storm, or post-HURRICANE SANDY in terms of plans to help your community recover, [please click here to send it to ALL ACCESS](#) for coverage.



Most D.C. Stations Go Wall-to-Wall on Sandy

WJLA divides coverage between broadcast, cable outlets

By John Eggerton -- Broadcasting & Cable, October 29, 2012

As Hurricane Sandy intensified Monday morning, most Washington TV stations road-blocked coverage of the storm, including a press conference with Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley warning that the storm would be a killer.

WRC-TV, D.C.'s NBC-owned station, for example, aired the first half-hour of *Today*, but was in local coverage from 4 a.m.-7 a.m. and then from 7:30 a.m. on.

"We are prepared to stay on while the storm is a threat to our viewers and our region," WRC manager of news, press and programming Matt Glassman told *B&C* Monday. The stations is tapping correspondents from NBC News, The Weather Channel, MSNBC, CNBC, and other owned stations and affiliates, he said, "so our viewers are aware of what's happening in other parts of the east coast."

The stations also have reporters on the Delaware beaches and other vacation spots for D.C. residents, and station meteorologists are also doing double duty on local radio.

Choosing not to drop regular morning programming was WJLA-TV, but that station has a joint news operation with co-owned NewsChannel 8 -- both are owned by Allbritton -- the regional cable news channel.

"We are doing weather cut-ins every half hour," said station spokesperson Abby Fenton. "Our noon show will be extended to an hour long and we will have a special 4 p.m. newscast." But the station is also ready to ramp up that coverage as the situation warrants. "[I]f our weather team decides we need to increase coverage given the severity of the storm, we will do so," she said. "We are fluid and ready to provide the best and most up to date information."

Unlike the other stations, WJLA has that 24-hour news outlet partner. "The NewsChannel 8 option is a key reason we are able to do things the way we are doing them," said Fenton. "We also have extensive storm information on our website." During NewsChannel 8's coverage, Prince George's County Maryland County Executive Rushern Baker thanked NewsChannel Eight for the job they are doing on the air.

Fenton said that the plan, for now, is "is continuous coverage on one of our local channels and extensive but not wall to wall on our other channel."

WUSA, the CBS affiliate, was streaming its coverage online and advised viewers to charge their computers and phones so they could follow the TV storm coverage there if need be. WJLA, WRC and Fox affiliate WTTG.

"We are modifying all coverage plans based on the weather, flooding, outages etc.," said Sandra Gehring of WUSA. "We went on live at 4 a.m., 30 minutes before our normal morning news starts time, and plan right now to stay on the air up through and including our early evening news block, 5 p.m. - 7:30 p.m."

WUSA is also shifting its soap operas to its digital channel, 9.2.

WTTG was advising viewers with smart phones to download its Fox 5 weather ap, which would allow them to track storm coverage by Zip code and city.

"WTTG began [Sunday] night with a 90 minute newscast after the final game of the World Series," according to a station spokesperson. "[We] came back on a few hours later at 4 a.m. and has been on ever since. Live coverage will be broadcast all night tonight and through at least noon [Tuesday]. "WTTG is planned to stay on covering the storm at least through 6:30 p.m. Tuesday night."

The station has crews in Ocean City, Md., Annapolis, Md., Alexandria, Va., and many other low-lying neighborhoods in its viewing area. Political reporter Tom Fitzgerald is covering the storm the storm's impact on the elections--effects on early voting, for example, and changes in campaign plans.

Reporters for the station are in Rehoboth Beach, Del.; Asbury Park, N.J.; New York City, Virginia Beach, Va., and elsewhere.

WNYW News Director Reflects on Hurricane Coverage: ‘You just saw the resourcefulness and the capabilities of some of these people’

By Merrill Knox on November 1, 2012 2:05 PM

For WNYW-WWOR in New York City, Hurricane Sandy coverage has been a “total team effort.”

“It’s been all hands on deck,” vice president and news director Dianne Doctor told *TVSpy* Thursday morning. “I’m really proud of our people and I think we’ve done a great job.”

Staffers at the Fox duopoly (like reporter Kerry Drew, pictured) have been working in 12 hour shifts since Sunday, the day before Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New Jersey. Crews who have been out in the field for four days are now facing a new challenge: gas lines in the Tri-state area that stretch for miles, snarling traffic on the Jersey Turnpike. Doctor said the station has contracted out private suppliers of fuel to keep their satellite trucks running.

“We’re having difficulty as well but we’re pretty resourceful. Our crews know their areas pretty well. They’ve been able to keep gas supplies coming,” Doctor said. “But it is a challenge.”

WNYW recently signed a chopper-sharing agreement with WCBS, the CBS O&O. In a situation where the aerial pictures are crucial to the story — both to illustrate the devastation and to get to areas that the crews on the ground can’t access — the partnership has been especially important, Doctor said.

“It’s working great. The two assignment desks are working together,” she said. “Everybody is really cooperative and we’ve been able to maximize the use of the helicopter.”

Doctor said the use of Internet-based technology helped the station’s mobility during the storm. It was especially useful in Lower Manhattan, where power went out Monday evening and has not returned since, Doctor said. The station streamed images of the pitch-dark city from a moving car.

“It was a live look at a blacked-out city,” Doctor said. “Watching it you really understood what was going on.”

Doctor has been particularly proud of her reporters in the field (like Kerry Drew, pictured), noting that John Huddy’s reporting from Long Island and Joel Waldman’s from Howard Beach have stood out. She said a memorable moment was hearing Dan Bowen, reporting live from Seaside, recount one of his meals, which were stockpiled for field crews ahead of time, during the storm.

“He was talking about how without power he was heating up his soup on the engine of his truck, and he said it was the best food that he had had,” Doctor said. “You just saw the resourcefulness and the capabilities of some of these people.”

All told, WNYW-WWOR have produced more than 100 hours of Sandy coverage over the past four days.

“It’s too soon for me to step back and assess [what’s next],” she said. “I think we’re still in that situation where we’re moving forward and covering it as it unfolds.”



Greater Media New Jersey stays live and local

By [Carl Marcucci](#) on Oct, 30 2012 with [Comments 0](#)

Greater Media New Jersey stations (1450AM WCTC, MAGIC 98.3, WDHA-FM, WMTR-AM, MAGIC 100.1 and WRAT-FM) were prepared in advance with multiple redundancies to assure the public that there would be uninterrupted content delivery. As a result, there was no down time- if power went down- they were ready. In addition, they did not have any equipment issues.

“Our programming remains live and local. We will continue to provide constant updates to listeners and are partnering with local authorities to provide the latest information. In addition, we are also encouraging listeners to call-in updates from the ground.

Our stations have become the gathering point in our communities for immediate information. We plan on initiating a huge campaign to help the community recover. However, right now people are still being rescued. We are in immediate mode.”

Stations Improvise to Cover Massive Sandy

Everyone within the station, and beyond, can contribute to covering breaking story

By Michael Malone -- Broadcasting & Cable, 10/29/2012 4:20:08 PM

Local television executives like to say it's all hands on deck when breaking news such as a lethal hurricane hits, and sometimes that even means the station general manager grabbing a camera and playing photographer for a few hours.

That's what Craig Jahelka, vice president and general manager at WBOC in Salisbury, Md., did when the station needed someone to haul a camera around Monday morning, with Hurricane Sandy lurking off shore. "At times like this," he says, "everyone's got to pitch in."

Covering Irene last year is fresh on East Coast reporters' minds, but it's becoming clearer that Irene was a relative non-issue compared with the massive magnitude of Sandy. No less an expert than [Weather Channel reporter Jim Cantore told B&C](#), "You could probably put two Irenes inside this thing, maybe two and a half. The size of this enormous."

Covering such a giant event presents a stiff challenge for station reporters. Within the CBS family, reporters, and equipment, from as far off as Minneapolis and Dallas headed east to pitch in with owned stations in New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston. "It's probably the biggest storm we've experienced in more than a generation," said David Friend, senior VP of news at the CBS owned stations.

Stations are making the most of technological and social media advances -- at times with resources that were not available, or not as widely available, as recently as when Irene rolled up the coast. CBS' Mobile 2 Weather Lab is an SUV equipped with weather technology, including wind meters and rain gauges, to provide street level weather updates. "It brings viewers closer to the action," says Friend. "At the end of the day, that's what we're here for."

The technological ambitions in DMA No. 144 are more modest. WBOC is partnering with Clear Channel Radio and Delmarva Public Radio to simulcast its news on the radio. The TV screen features three crawls side by side by side: breaking news, school closings and closings of hospitals, businesses, etc. A new smartphone app will keep people connected when the power shuts down -- something the station did not offer during Irene.

"That's new for us," says Jahelka. "We hope it's a life saver."

Stations are asking viewers to pitch in with the reporting. WMDT Salisbury (Md.) has 25-30 "Weather Watchers" -- local weather aficionados around the market who contribute images and readings. When WNYW New York's crew heard about the wind-induced crane collapse in Manhattan Monday, vice president news director Dianne Doctor went to Facebook -- and promptly found a photo of the structure, posted by a friend who lives down the block from where the incident took place.

The role of social media in newsgathering has increased even since Irene, says Doctor. "It continues to explode," she says. "Everyone's a reporter. It makes our coverage better. The storm is so vast that it's the only effective way to cover this story."

In the nation's largest DMA around 3 p.m., the meteorologists were forecasting an earlier landfall than was initially thought -- Sandy perhaps hitting southern New Jersey by 5 p.m. The storm surge concept dominated coverage. "The coastal erosion could be enormous," said Lonnie Quinn, WCBS chief meteorologist. "I think our shoreline could be changed because of this storm."

WNYW reporter Matt Alvarez was in Long Branch, N.J., getting pummeled by wind and waves. "The major part of this thing has yet to strike," he said. "You just wonder what that will be like."

Newsroom denizens are prepping for a long night of covering the moving story. One weapon in the WBOC arsenal, a helicopter, will remain in its hangar until the thick of the storm passes through. At that point, the station will take to the skies to assess the damage. "As we get our first look at everything, we'll share that with viewers," said Jahelka. "Good, bad or indifferent, people want to see it."



TV Doing What TV Does Best

Chuck Ross ■ Posted October 29, 2012 at 5:47 AM

Millions of citizens will be watching TV in the next 24-48 hours, tracking Hurricane Sandy.

There will be plenty of people watching from thousands of miles away, like I've been doing here in L.A.

But there will also be the millions who are affected by the storm directly, who will be watching their local channels to monitor the storm in their community.

The service provided by this coverage in local communities cannot be overpraised. It's TV doing what TV does best.

I wonder which TV station will emerge as the WWL of this storm. WWL, the Belo affiliate in New Orleans, did extraordinary coverage of another big storm, Katrina.

With a blog, live streaming video over the Internet and backup using the facilities of LSU (in Baton Rouge) and then Louisiana Public Broadcasting, WWL provided a beacon for those in the New Orleans community like no other. As one viewer said, "When every light was out, WWL was there."

If the coverage WWL did wasn't exemplary enough, check out the video below. As a news crew is shooting a flooded street during Katrina, a car drives into it. That's WWL producer Chris Merrifield who says, "Excuse me," to the cameraman and runs into the water to help rescue the driver.

To all the TV personnel who are covering Sandy, and who have covered previous disasters and storms and who will cover them in the future, a big thank you from all of us watching.