

# Hurricane Irma Case Study

## Expert Support and Frequent Communication Keeps Customers Online During Storm

In early September 2017, Hurricane Irma tore through the Caribbean leaving mass destruction in its wake. As the storm headed toward Florida, weather bureaus warned of the damaging winds, torrential rain and flooding the Category 4 hurricane would bring. Faced with the potential of power outages, lost connectivity and infrastructure damage, businesses readied themselves for the worst. Peak 10 + ViaWest, a hybrid IT infrastructure provider, was also busy preparing its facilities. With its Tampa, Fort Lauderdale and Jacksonville data centers in the hurricane's direct path, and other sites vulnerable, the company coordinated its resources to protect the availability, integrity and security of its customers' technology infrastructure.

## Emergency Preparedness Protocols Lay a Solid Foundation as Hurricane Irma Approaches

At the root of Peak 10 + ViaWest's ability to provide customers with outstanding availability and support – even in an emergency – is its state-of-the-art facilities and upfront planning. Strategically located to offer geographic redundancy, its [network of data centers](#) are located outside of flood zones, boast hardened concrete construction and are designed to withstand hurricane-force winds. Within each Peak 10 + ViaWest facility, redundant UPS systems and generators with N+1 or 2N configurations are employed to ensure uninterrupted power supplies, and multiple computer room air conditioning units with N+1 configurations sufficiently regulate the IT environment if one cooling system fails.

Peak 10 + ViaWest's emergency preparation further supports this built-in redundancy. This proactive process integrates a comprehensive preventative maintenance schedule, 24/7/365 infrastructure monitoring, ongoing staff training and routine assessments to ensure its IT infrastructure and staff are ready at a moment's notice.

“Our customers rely on us to sustain their operations during emergency situations,” said Jeff Biggs, executive vice president of operations and technology for Peak 10 + ViaWest. “We take that responsibility very seriously and take every necessary precaution to ensure we are fully prepared to support their needs and maintain the integrity of their operations.”

These systematic preparations were tested as Hurricane Irma approached Florida. Armed with its Emergency Response Plan, which outlines the policies and procedures to follow to prepare for and manage an emergency situation, Peak 10 + ViaWest quickly began clearing debris from outside the data centers, securing doors and windows, and ensuring that water, food, bedding and other supplies were available to allow its internal teams and its customers to remain on-site as long as needed. Additionally, emergency power systems, redundant network infrastructure and carrier connectivity were tested; fuel

tanks were topped off; network and carrier connectivity redundancy was checked; contact information and communication plans were confirmed; and vendors were put on standby for emergency refueling should an extended outage occur.

## Peak 10 + ViaWest's 'Go' Team Jumps to Action to Strengthen Customer Support Capabilities

Peak 10 + ViaWest's successful disaster response is further complemented by its highly skilled and dedicated people. Available 24/7/365, its on-site skilled engineers and support personnel protect the security, agility, and reliability of its customers' technology infrastructure.

To support the expected increase in on-site customers and storm-related responsibilities, Peak 10 + ViaWest assessed each data center's needs to ensure an appropriate level of available support. Lying in the hurricane's direct path, the Fort Lauderdale, Tampa and Jacksonville facilities required additional resources, and Peak 10 + ViaWest quickly dispatched "Go" teams to each facility.

Composed of key company leaders, IT support staff and engineers from Peak 10 + ViaWest data centers unaffected by the storm, this mobile response team offered auxiliary aid and allowed local personnel to return home to weather the storm with their families. Each member of the "Go" team is rigorously cross-trained to perform multiple roles and regularly participates in disaster simulations through the company's [Data Center Academy](#) training program to ensure operational redundancy and preparedness in an emergency. As "Go" teams seamlessly transitioned into their assigned facilities, they lost no time to a learning curve thanks to the uniform design of Peak 10 + ViaWest's network and infrastructure across its data centers.

This high level of support was not lost on Peak 10 + ViaWest customers, and Jeff Biggs agrees.

"Our people are a critical component of any disaster preparedness and recovery solution. Our 'Go' team provides the local support our customers need to protect their IT assets and maintain their operations."

## DR Workspaces Offer a Secure Work Environment in the Face of Disaster

Given the destruction anticipated from Hurricane Irma, Peak 10 + ViaWest expected a heavy customer presence in its data centers. Its disaster recovery (DR) workspaces offered customers a safe, comfortable space to work before, during and after the storm. Available as individual cubicle or suites, the DR spaces were equipped with PC workstations with a keyboard and mouse, VoIP Phones and links to their equipment.

Prior to customers coming on-site, Peak 10 + ViaWest confirmed that each workspace was ready for occupancy. Fort Lauderdale had 47 customers on-site making preparations prior to the storm, and 53 customers rode out the storm at the facility. Overall, more than 100 individuals from customer companies took advantage of the work areas within the data centers to take the necessary precautions to keep their servers up and running.

## Constant Communication Keeps Customers and the National Team Connected

While preparation and expertise were essential to ensuring full availability during Hurricane Irma, consistent communication was another key piece of the DR puzzle. Throughout the hurricane readiness process, Peak 10 + ViaWest used its notification systems to communicate with its customers and key internal resources. Utilizing its Emergency Notification System, customers received twice-daily notifications outlining the steps Peak 10 + ViaWest was taking to prepare its data centers for the storm, how it was handling storm-related issues and the state of the data centers. It also provided recommendations to help customers safeguard their own assets, including verifying recent backups and confirming their contact lists were updated.

Even data centers not in direct danger of Hurricane Irma received reports. While the storm had lessened to a tropical depression by the time it reached Nashville, Tenn. and Louisville, Ky. these markets were advised that Peak 10 + ViaWest was closely monitoring the situation and was prepared to address any storm-related issues.

## Weathering the Storm Without Downtime

Despite heavy rains and wind gusts that took down trees and impacted utility power sources throughout the entire state of Florida, Peak 10 + ViaWest data centers remained operational throughout the storm with 100% uptime. With winds reported over 60 mph by the National Weather Service, the Tampa data center at Parkedge Drive experienced a series of power sags and hits, and proactively transferred to generator power for over 24 hours. The same was true for Fort Lauderdale, which sustained its operations on a generator for 16 hours. With approximately 50 customers on-site and half of its contracted DR workspaces in use, the facility provided 100% availability to its customers.

The Tampa Corporate Lake Drive and Atlanta Northwoods Parkway data centers briefly transferred to a generator to remain online. The local teams closely monitored the situation to determine the appropriate time to safely transfer back to utility power.

As Hurricane Irma passed, “Go” teams in each affected market evaluated their facilities and operations and began addressing issues. Facilities that utilized generators coordinated with fuel vendors to quickly replenish fuel supplies and also notified utility providers of power losses. Each facility continued to closely monitor power supplies and network connectivity to ensure ongoing accessibility, while clearly communicating these details to the larger Peak 10 + ViaWest team.

Peak 10 + ViaWest quickly began receiving praise from customers. One customer – an industrial field services

company – thanked the Peak 10 + ViaWest team in Tampa for “the outstanding service and support over the weekend,” adding, “all of our core business services remained available during the storm and we experienced no significant issues.”

Recognizing the effort and preparation behind the stability and service experienced during Hurricane Irma, a multinational e-commerce corporation and Atlanta customer wrote, “Thanks for keeping the lights on and our business operational during the hurricane event. Please pass along my sincere thanks to everyone that worked long hours and made personal sacrifices over the past week to make this a NON-event for your customers. I know that this does not happen without lots of planning, preparation, and flawless execution.”

By executing its preparedness plan and leveraging its expertise, the Peak 10 + ViaWest team effectively endured the storm and provided its customers with an unparalleled experience.

“The level of preparedness and commitment that our team delivered to our customers during Hurricane Irma was just outstanding,” says Chris Downie, CEO of Peak 10 + ViaWest “Having that level of support and reliability to maintain 100% uptime during the storm offers a peace of mind that is hard to put a price tag on.”

## Learn More

To learn more about Peak 10 + ViaWest data center and colocation services, visit [www.peak10.com](http://www.peak10.com). Or contact us at <http://www.peak10.com/contact-us>.