

March 20, 2020

Information on Carrier Best Practices & Procedures Regarding COVID-19

I have compiled the following information from communications with ITA member companies, the Illinois Rural Broadband Association and from information shared by other national and state telecom and broadband associations (hat tip to the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association and Iowa Communications Alliance for sharing their information). The following summary of information may assist you in developing best practices and procedures during the Coronavirus pandemic as we strive to protect our employees and keep our communities and customers connected. While each company will handle procedures differently, the following information is being provided as a resource.

As always, please feel free to contact me with questions and concerns. Also please feel free to share additional information or procedures your company has put in place so we can work through this situation together.

Service installations, customer support & trouble tickets:

- Most companies are continuing to make in-home visits for at least some services
- Most companies are continuing to do new installs and resolve trouble tickets, with some companies putting an emphasis on installations for students in need of internet access for education

Actions taken prior to technicians making in-home visits:

Most companies are asking additional questions and providing additional information related to COVID-19 prior to a technician visit. Here is a sample of some of the questions being asked and information being provided:

1. Have you or anyone in the home recently been out of the country?
2. Is anyone in your home sick or quarantined?
3. Has anyone in the home experienced flu-like symptoms or had a fever?
4. Techs are assisting multiple customers daily – do you want to continue with scheduling the repair/installation?
5. Techs are required to keep a safe distance when they are in a customer premise – they must stay at least 6 feet away from the customer
6. Companies are discouraging meetings at garages and asking supervisors and managers to limit communications to only high-priority items that are service-impacting

Additional precautions taken by techs prior to entering the home:

1. Reconfirm when reaching the customer location that nobody is sick or quarantined
2. Request that customers and technicians keep a safe (minimum of 6 ft.) distance from each other
3. Reschedule (for at least 14 days later) if the customer has traveled outside of the area, has flown or attended a gathering of more than 50 people
4. Techs have authorization to postpone the work and contact their supervisors if they feel unsafe; they can refuse to enter the premise or leave a job in progress
5. In many cases, techs are using disposable gloves, masks and hand sanitizer to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus

Remote troubleshooting and customer self-installation:

- Increase remote troubleshooting efforts – IT consulting over phone before a technician is sent to a customer location
- In some cases, companies may leave equipment on the doorstep with instructions for self-installation

Office functions and availability:

- Employees that are ill should notify their manager and not come to work
- Some companies are encouraging and facilitating employees to work from home where possible, encourage the practice of workplace distancing and encouraging meetings via teleconference
- Some companies are closing their lobbies and offices to the public and vendors
- Some companies allow customers to call for appointments if there is an issue that cannot be resolved over the phone
- Some companies are having technicians report directly to their vehicles and home garaging to reduce group interaction at field offices and warehouses
- Some companies have implemented a 14-day quarantine for employees returning from out of state travel or travel where large group meetings occurred
- One company reported using tubs assigned to techs for supplies that get set out with fresh supplies as needed and tubs are cleaned after each use allowing techs to stay in their trucks as much as possible when picking up/dropping off supplies