

Georgia Power Depends on SouthernLINC Wireless for Reliable Communications in All Weather Conditions

Overview

When severe storms strike, Georgia Power's storm response teams must act swiftly to restore power in affected areas. No one understands the importance of communications in the aftermath of a tornado or hurricane more than Aaron Strickland, Georgia Power's storm director. With SouthernLINC Wireless, Strickland is able to ensure his response teams throughout the state can communicate with each other and with counterparts in other Southern Company operating companies – Alabama Power, Gulf Power and Mississippi Power.

The SouthernLINC Wireless network was built to meet the needs of Southern Company's power companies, which require highly reliable communications during all kinds of weather. For Strickland, SouthernLINC Wireless has been able to resolve Georgia Power's weather-related communications challenges better than its previous solution, a 450 MHz radio system.

Challenge

Before SouthernLINC Wireless began meeting Georgia Power's wireless communication needs in 1996, Strickland was faced with his share of challenges: His communications platform was a 450 MHz radio system that only worked within a small radius. Further, the radio system didn't ensure privacy; Georgia Power officials worried that sensitive conversations related to their storm recovery efforts could be overheard on the radio system.

The 450 MHz radio system also didn't allow Georgia Power's employees to communicate with employees of Southern Company's other operating companies, who were all using different communications systems. Interoperability is especially critical during and after major storms because Georgia Power often enlists the help of additional response teams from Alabama Power, Gulf Power and Mississippi Power.

Finally, the 450 MHz system was never able to ensure that all parties could connect in a talk group at the same time. The possibility that someone may miss important communications during storm recovery efforts became a major concern for Georgia Power. In particular, Georgia Power was worried that the 450 MHz system could fail during switching efforts, a time when it is extremely important for all involved to remain in close communication.

"When we're doing the switching, transferring or putting electricity down, we want everyone to be able to listen to our orders and then go," said Strickland. "If you can't talk to people to confirm that everyone knows what's going on, it becomes a very risky situation."

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GEORGIA POWER

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SouthernLINC Wireless Aids Georgia Power in its Recovery Efforts

CHALLENGE

Spring and summer bring the state of Georgia pleasant weather, but these seasons also bring tornados and severe thunderstorms. During harsh weather conditions, Georgia Power's storm director and response teams need a dependable wireless communications partner to provide reliable cellular and Push to Talk two-way radio service.

SOLUTION

Southern Company formed SouthernLINC Wireless in 1996 to meet the telecommunications needs of its operating companies, including Georgia Power. The SouthernLINC Wireless network is built to weather-grade specifications with reinforced cell sites designed to withstand winds up to 120 mph, heavy rain and ice loads.

RESULT

Compared to Georgia Power's previous communications solution – a 450 MHz radio system – SouthernLINC Wireless enables immediate, private communications among Georgia Power's storm response teams throughout the state. The SouthernLINC Wireless network also facilitates communications with storm response teams from Alabama Power, Gulf Power and Mississippi Power, which has proven beneficial in Georgia Power's recovery efforts.

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Solution

SouthernLINC Wireless has been the wireless communications provider for Georgia Power – as well as Alabama Power, Gulf Power and Mississippi Power – for more than 12 years. Since SouthernLINC Wireless provides coverage throughout Southern Company's operating area, all of Georgia Power's crews can communicate with one another as well as with counterparts in neighboring states.

The company's Push to Talk two-way radio service is especially valuable, facilitating real-time, private communications for Georgia Power's emergency response teams. And, because all crews use SouthernLINC Wireless, everyone can count on reliable communications using Push to Talk two-way radio, which is crucial during the switching of electricity.

"SouthernLINC Wireless is so much better than anything we've had," said Strickland. "Before, we couldn't talk to anyone on the other side of the state, and now it doesn't matter if I'm in Valdosta and need to reach someone in Atlanta; this really is the beauty of the SouthernLINC Wireless system."

The SouthernLINC Wireless network has built-in redundancies and extra security features to make sure communication is possible even during severe weather. In addition, the SouthernLINC Wireless network is digital and private, which means that Georgia Power's response teams don't have to worry about others interfering with recovery efforts. There is no known scanner that can intercept communications over the SouthernLINC Wireless network.

Benefits

Strickland has identified three primary benefits of SouthernLINC Wireless:

- **Reliability:** Since SouthernLINC Wireless built its system with back-up batteries, generators and towers designed to withstand severe ice and winds, Strickland knows he can connect with all recovery teams even when storms strike numerous locales at the same time.
- **Interoperability:** With SouthernLINC Wireless, Strickland can speak with his teams at Georgia Power, as well as those from other Southern Company operating companies. Strickland confirmed that many vendors that support Georgia Power also are SouthernLINC Wireless customers, making it easy to connect and communicate with them.
- **Privacy:** Since the SouthernLINC Wireless network is digital and private, Strickland no longer worries about leaking sensitive information that may be disclosed during storm response calls.



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BENEFITS

Aaron Strickland, Georgia Power's storm director, noted that SouthernLINC Wireless has enabled the company to communicate with more response teams across the state than ever before. He also confirmed that the digital, private network and its interoperability with other Southern Company-owned utilities are SouthernLINC Wireless benefits he can't live without.