



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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Commonwealth IT infrastructure maintained operations through earthquake and Hurricane Irene

-- High service support levels continued during back-to-back, unprecedented natural disasters --

RICHMOND – Employees from the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) and Northrop Grumman Corporation ensured that the state’s information technology (IT) operations kept running during the extraordinary week when the Commonwealth was hit by an earthquake and Hurricane Irene. Through careful preparation, detailed planning and prompt action, staff maintained reliable service across the Commonwealth during the state of emergency.

“Employees across the IT program went above and beyond to ensure operations continued and vital services remained available across the Commonwealth,” said Chief Information Officer of the Commonwealth Sam Nixon. “The high service levels maintained during the two natural hazards demonstrate both the integrity of the IT infrastructure and the superb support our staff provide.”

Nixon said the response by VITA and Northrop Grumman operations teams to the unexpected 5.8 magnitude earthquake on Aug. 23 showcased their ability to adapt quickly. Within an hour of the earthquake, all teams had reported in with no issues and both data centers – in Chester and in Russell County – were operating as normal.

Over the next four days, he said, the teams prepared for Hurricane Irene by checking generators, rehearsing response protocols, proactively shutting down 217 servers to prevent storm damage, and undertaking other activities to protect and maintain IT services. The teams also deployed supplementary laptops to state agencies for additional field activities throughout the state of emergency.

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Despite widespread commercial power outages during the storm, data center operations were seamlessly transitioned to generator power. Support teams also traveled to state agencies during the storm to ensure the important services that citizens rely on remained operational.

VITA and Northrop Grumman team members also were at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) staffing the emergency service function that supported telecommunications and IT resources. They were acting as liaisons between the telecommunications providers in the state and the VEOC; getting service information from each line, wireless, broadband carrier; and tracking outages and restoration plans to ensure that they met the needs of those responding to the emergency. VITA staff at the VEOC coordinated the restoration of local 9-1-1 service in several localities impacted by the storm. Northrop Grumman personnel were at the VEOC providing onsite IT support.

“Our work was behind the scenes, but essential to continuing the provision of state services during both events,” Nixon said. “I am extremely proud of the work done by VITA and Northrop Grumman staff during these two natural disasters.”

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VITA is the Commonwealth's consolidated technology services and solutions provider agency responsible for the operation of the state's technology infrastructure, governance, security and oversight of major IT projects, and procurement of technology-related goods and services on behalf of state and local governments.

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