

VPS Memo

COVID-19: Recommendations for Broadband & Telecom Providers

BEST PRACTICES IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

These are unusual times, as COVID-19 has disrupted daily life and business operations across the country. In doing so, the current pandemic has highlighted the need for reliable, robust, fully supported broadband networks. Vantage Point offers the following recommendations and best practices for maintaining and supporting your networks and business continuity.

Personnel & Business Operations

Protect Your Employees

The [CDC](#) and [WHO](#) have established recommended protective measures, such as frequent handwashing and other hygienic measures. Additionally, OSHA also provides industry-specific information for protecting your staff. Though not an exhaustive list, examples of recommended procedures related to telecommunications include:

- Keeping your staff informed on internal procedures
- Post external procedures for customers (i.e. business office closed to public, shortened hours, etc.)
- Pre-screening on-site calls to protect technicians
 - “Does anyone in the home have a fever?”
 - “Has anyone been exposed to COVID-19?”
- Only send technicians out for emergency visits
 - Provide technical assistance via phone to reduce in-person visits or prepare short videos on common technical issues that can be posted online or sent to the customer
- Provide Personal Protective Equipment for employees

Establish Protective Measures for Office Workers

As providers of critical infrastructure, many broadband providers cannot close their offices completely. Protective measures for office workers may include:

- Using a “Drop Box” system for transferring files or other materials between in-office and out-of-office employees. This may be a room near an external door, a breezeway, or other location that does not require out-of-office staff to venture far into the building.
- Review the list of vendors (i.e. maintenance, delivery, etc.) that frequent the office to determine which are critical, which can be delayed, or if adjustments can be made to scheduling and frequency.
- For staff whose work can be done from home, establish a Virtual Private Network.
- Minimize face-to-face meetings among staff by using collaboration tools such as WebEx, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams.
- For individual offices with doors, close the doors.
- For staff with shared workspaces, such as cubicles, establish as much physical distance between staff as possible.
- To eliminate unnecessary foot traffic, post a notification on all entrances outlining policies on customers, vendors, family, and guests entering the building.
- Increase regular cleaning to cover shared resources like printers, coffee pots, and light switches.
- Provide cleaning supplies, disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizer throughout the office for employee use at their workspace.

Disaster Recovery Plan

Vantage Point wants to remind you to implement your Disaster Recovery Plan to help maintain business continuity. If you do not have a Disaster Recovery Plan, or yours does not include contingencies for a pandemic, please contact any of the Vantage Point team members listed below and we can assist you.

Pandemic Checklist

Vantage Point recommends forming a pandemic checklist to help maintain critical infrastructure during this time. This list should include procedures for repairing fiber cuts, maintaining e911 services, and identifying a list of essential staff. Additionally, we suggest making note of what works and what is unhelpful over the coming days and weeks. These notes can later be used to strengthen the pandemic checklist for a potential event in the future.

Community Support

You may consider an internal policy to support customers during this uncertain time by suspending disconnects, allowing late bill payment, or other measures. In this vein, FCC Chairman Pai has enacted the “Keep Americans Connected” Pledge found [here](#).

Network Support

We are already seeing increased network traffic as social distancing has encouraged the use of telehealth, online education, video conferencing, and streaming entertainment. Vantage Point encourages all network operators to consider the following items, and if necessary, we stand ready to assist:

Bandwidth Monitoring

Monitor your existing bandwidth to ensure you have adequate capacity and avoid network congestion. If you need assistance with bandwidth monitoring or securing additional capacity, please contact us.

VPN Capabilities

For companies who are shifting to work-from-home arrangements for their employees, you may need additional VPN licenses or other technical support. Vantage Point can assist in securing these if necessary.

Collaboration Tools

Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, and other collaboration tools can help maintain a semblance of “business as usual” while honoring social distancing measures. If your company would like assistance selecting, incorporating, or supporting these tools, Vantage Point can help.

Network Operations Support

Should you encounter decreased staff availability, Vantage Point network experts are available for remote technical support for virtually any need, including: network monitoring, remote provisioning, troubleshooting, and other critical functions.

Additional Information

Vantage Point is committed to providing uninterrupted service to our clients, and have undertaken several internal measures to ensure the safety of our team and protect our availability to serve you.

If you have any questions about operations or best practices as we work through COVID-19, please contact these members of the Vantage Point team:

FOR PERSONNEL & BUSINESS OPERATIONS:

Jill Weber at (605) 995-1832 or Jill.Weber@vantagepnt.com

Wendy Harper at (605) 995-1756 or Wendy.Harper@vantagepnt.com

Dereck DeVries at (605) 995-1762 or Dereck.DeVries@vantagepnt.com

FOR NETWORK SUPPORT:

Andy Deinert at (605) 995-1765 or Andy.Deinert@vantagepnt.com