

RAPID CITY STORM DAMAGE REPORT

NORTHWESTERN BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY

On Friday, June 9, 1972, at 7:00 p.m., the Rapid City exchange of the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company began flood preparations. By 11:30 p.m., the flood had disrupted communications to nine Northwestern Bell exchanges, two Independent Company exchanges, five Minuteman Missile sites and the central office equipment was in an overloaded condition. By this time, all exchange management and craft employees who could be reached had been notified to stand by for call-out duty. The Ellsworth Air Force Base Communications Officer was also notified of the emergency communications problems.

The Emergency Storm Center was activated and men were dispatched to maintain emergency services. Additional operators were called to work at 4:00 a.m. When morning arrived, we estimated that one-fourth of the Rapid City exchange was out of service, that we were isolated from other local exchanges but that we were able to maintain long distance toll communications with the Bell System Network. By 8:00 a.m. Saturday morning, all switchboard positions were filled and we were operating at maximum capacity. Rapid City circuits to points throughout the country were directionalized to permit the maximum number of calls to leave Rapid City, since these calls were of a greater emergency nature than most calls coming into the area. Two manual circuits were established to take priority inward emergency calls from the world into Rapid City, via Sioux Falls. Rapid City operators handled nearly 21,000 calls on June 10 compared to a normal volume of about 4,000. We called in 100 additional men for engineering, construction and repair, raising our manpower to over two and one-half times the normal level. By early

Sunday, we had raised our crew levels to 250 employees, more than three times our normal operational level, calling on the resources of the Bell System for this immediate manpower requirement. We also diverted all supply shipments from our supplier, Western Electric, to Rapid City, immediately providing nearly two years of normal requirements in cable, telephones and other supplies for the Rapid City emergency. By 9:00 Saturday morning, mobile units were placed at Central High School for the Police Department and emergency telephone services. By 3:00 p.m., one-third of the out-of-service telephones were repaired and toll service to the Northern Hills telephone exchanges and the EAFB Missile sites was restored.

Rapid City operators handled local calls from the National Guard and the Red Cross on a manual basis on Saturday, June 10, and Sunday, June 11, to speed calls during severe overloads in the dial equipment and slow dial tone. Dial assignment made several equipment reassignments to place special emergency numbers into dial tone priority groups as the new numbers were designated.

On Sunday, June 11, mobile telephone units from Sioux Falls provided emergency telephone service in the flooded areas, including the Independent Company exchange at Keystone, South Dakota. Rapid City operators relayed messages from the Keystone area to points outside the disaster area to let families and friends of the Keystone people know that various families and individuals were alive and well. Telephone services were established for the Red Cross, Civil Defense, CBS, Office of Emergency Preparedness, City of Rapid City and Bennett-Clarkson Hospital. Coordinators had been sent to the local, state, and federal governments, military branches and Civil Defense offices to determine communications requirements. As they called or brought in their

requirements, a person was assigned to each order to personally assure the completion of that order, hand carrying the order through the various steps necessary to assign, dispatch and install the service. Teams were dispatched throughout the damaged areas by functions: repair, engineering, and construction.

On Monday, June 12, additional services were installed for the South Dakota Department of Health, KKLS Radio, Red Cross, County Court House Emergency Operating Center, the Camp Rapid National Guard Emergency Operating Center and St. John's Hospital. Free emergency telephones were installed for the convenience of the public in the disaster areas. Nearly twenty percent of the Rapid City exchange telephones remained out of service, but the toll calling network had been expanded and the overloaded situation in the central office was returning to normal levels.

On Tuesday, June 13, twelve additional free emergency telephones were placed throughout the disaster areas. The telephone installation requirements of agencies which were installed on this date constituted a regular one-month workload. Long distance toll service was also restored to the Hill City and Keystone exchanges.

On Wednesday and Thursday, June 13 and 14, significant progress was made in constructing and repairing telephone plant in Rapid City. More than one-half of the telephones out of service were restored and enormous business services were installed for the agencies assisting the Rapid City effort. A directory of disaster phone services was compiled, printed and distributed. At this time, interview teams were dispatched into the damaged areas to determine the service requirements and plans of the homeowners.

At this writing, approximately 780 telephones of the original 12,545 telephones remain out of service. Most of these are in Rapid City. Network controls were necessary through June 18, particularly

during the early evening hours. Our manpower requirements have remained at the 250 man level, still approximately the equivalent of three times our ordinary level. We now estimate our restoral costs to be in excess of one and one-half million dollars. The resources of the Bell System and Western Electric were invaluable in immediately furnishing the men, equipment and supplies necessary to repair the results of this disaster. Without the flexibility provided by the size of the Bell System, Rapid City telephone restoration would have been a matter of weeks rather than days.

June 22, 1972