

# Telecom crews ready for Rita's rampage

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Cadres of telecom crews are standing by for the arrival of Rita, the second major hurricane to plow into the wobbly Gulf Coast this season.

The storm was expected to make landfall near Galveston, Texas, and roll into Houston early Saturday, tearing up utility poles and cell towers and likely leaving thousands of people with no communication with the outside world.

Cingular Wireless said in a statement late Thursday that its network was built to survive hurricane-force winds, but it has repair crews and equipment ready to move in as soon as the winds die down.

Among Cingular's emergency resources are trucks and trailers designed to act as portable cell towers that can be moved into areas where permanent towers have been knocked out of action.

Customers in east Texas and Louisiana were urged to charge up their phones before Rita's arrival and pre-program numbers for police and other emergency agencies into their phones as well. Wrapping the phone in a plastic bag will prevent damage from expected driving rain and flooding.

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