

Houston, New Orleans mobile use spike

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Mobile-device use in Houston and New Orleans has seen a spike since Hurricane Katrina, a research group said Monday.

San Francisco-based Telephia reported that monthly mobile use in the two cities grew by more than 250 minutes in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period a year ago. The average monthly voice minutes used in the Houston area rose 31 percent to 1,106 minutes, while in New Orleans 1,072 minute were used on average.

In third place came Daytona Beach with 900 minutes.

"Mobile communications became a lifeline for many of the residents who were forced to evacuate their homes and it clearly played a critical role in the coordination of family and friends immediately following Hurricane Katrina," said Tamara Gaffney, product director at Telephia. "Interestingly, this heightened mobile usage continued long after landline telephone communications services were restored. This may reflect the ongoing disruption that many residents of these cities still face, but also suggests a more lasting change in consumer usage patterns born out of the hurricane experience."

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