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Digital 395 Plays Key Public Safety Role During Recent Fires

CBC Maintains and Restores Communications to Area

BISHOP, CALIFORNIA – In less than a year following its completion, the Digital 395 network continues to quietly demonstrate its extraordinary value to California’s Eastern Sierra Region. In the midst of the recent fires in Mono County, California Broadband Cooperative’s (CBC) fiber optic network worked uninterrupted to provide critical communications to First Responders and other local officials struggling to contain the fires and bring order back to the area.

While the winds and fires took down the overhead utility lines providing telephone, cellular and power services to many parts of Mono County, the CBC network continued to provide an umbrella of communications to the area. As commercial power failed, Digital 395’s UPS batteries and generators kicked into action to keep the 150 Gigabits of data flowing; and since the network was installed underground to better protect it from fire and other elements, it provided much-needed assurance to local officials and that they would remain in service. “As long as local power was available to run their equipment, customers who were connected to the Digital 395 network enjoyed uninterrupted service”, said Nick Keeler, VP and General Manager of Inyo Networks, the company that supports CBC’s Digital 395 network operations. “We just made sure that the fuel for the generators were topped off so that we could continue to power the network for another couple of weeks if needed.”

On Sunday, after an all-night work session Inyo Networks and Verizon crews completed the emergency connection to the Verizon Mammoth Lakes central office that fully restored telephone service to the Verizon customer’s affected by the outage.

“CBC expresses its deepest sympathies to those who lost their homes or were otherwise affected by these tragedies in Mono County”, said Robert Volker Chief Executive Officer of CBC. “As the members of the community came together to combat the threat, our team worked tirelessly throughout the weekend to craft a solution to the area’s communications outages. We are particularly proud of the role that Inyo Network’s team played in tying the area’s networks together to minimize outages. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing people work together to make things happen.”

Since its commissioning late last year, the Digital 395 network has steadily elevated the “digital landscape” of the Eastern Sierra region. In addition to over 200 schools, hospitals, and government buildings, CBC provides “backbone” internet service to local service providers like Inyo Networks, Schatnet, Suddenlink, and Lone Pine TV, whose services were also available during the outages.

According to Mr. Keeler, Inyo Networks is engaged in an on-going effort to extend the reach of broadband throughout the area by bringing more community anchor institutions on line, encouraging Last Mile Providers to increase their bandwidth offerings, and to see broadband as an invaluable economic development resource.

By this summer, all Eastern Sierra schools will have gigabit connections to the Internet for testing and distance learning. Hospitals in Mammoth and Ridgecrest have introduced new health care measures and procedures to take advantage of the new bandwidth. And all three Counties (Mono/Inyo/Kern) have introduced policies or initiatives to ensure that broadband gets to all of its citizens. Many local residents noticed a big jump in their broadband speeds last year as CBC piped their services to the local service providers.

Funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and by the California Public Utilities Commission, the Digital 395 mission was to bring affordable broadband to rural America. Another important factor, although less prominent, was to supply infrastructure that would improve public safety. “I was delighted to see the network perform just as we had designed and expected that it would,” said Michael Ort, CEO of Praxis Associates, Inc., the company that designed and oversaw the construction of the network. “As the power went offline, we saw the generators come up in a blink. But ultimately the key to all of this is having the people – those that built it right and those that continue to keep it in ship-shape condition. We are very grateful that the CPUC and the Department of Commerce had the vision to make this investment. It seems to be paying off as expected.” Speaking on behalf of the CBC Board of Directors, Ort added, “We are glad to have played our part in helping the community overcome this tragedy and look forward to more we can do to improve security and the quality of life in the Eastern Sierra.”

About California Broadband Cooperative:

California Broadband Cooperative, Inc. (CBC) is a member owned, not-for-profit, California Cooperative Corporation formed for the purposes of building and operating the Digital 395 network, The Digital 395 network provides high-speed broadband services to its members on a wholesale, open-access basis.

About Inyo Networks:

Inyo Networks, Inc. is a certificated Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) registered with the CPUC and FCC. It provides high speed data and voice services to commercial customers in the Eastern Sierra, Southern California and Northern Nevada region. Inyo Networks is a full service sales agent for the Digital 395 and also provides operational support services to CBC.

About Praxis Associates:

Praxis Associates, Inc. is a fiber optic network development company that specializes in developing complete broadband solutions for Public Private Partnership networks. Praxis specialties include business case development, grant applications and administration, Rights-of-Way and Permits, local and long haul engineering, project management and fiber optic construction services. Praxis clients include large-scale telecommunications firms, companies and communities developing private networks, and governmental entities. Praxis is the managing agent for the Digital 395 Network on behalf of CBC. Praxis corporate offices are located in Vallejo, California with regional offices in Bishop, CA, Reno, NV and Rancho Cucamonga, CA.