

Smart Grid Focus

Broadband 'Significant' Enabler of Energy Efficiency, Says Verizon Official

"Information technology is at the heart of the smart grid," and it's where carriers like Verizon can play a big role, said Robert Heffron, the carrier's utility marketing manager. Verizon can bring in its combined assets to work with application providers to "allow the reality of the smart grid to be realized by consumers and businesses worldwide," he said Thursday on a webinar organized by the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions.

In the years ahead, Verizon's environmental emphasis will be on smart grids, smart buildings, smart logistics for transportation and provision of "network-centric solutions" to help "better manage and drive down greenhouse gas emissions," Heffron said. Broadband is a "key component" of the strategy, he said. "It enables the smarter systems to improve efficiency and meet the numerous customer and business needs."

Internally, Verizon will continue its thrust toward efficiency, use of renewable energy, and improving network efficiency, Heffron said. Starting this year, Verizon has asked its network equipment suppliers to improve efficiency of gear over current versions 20 percent, he said. Use of ultra-long-haul technology has helped the company reduce 116 million kilowatt hours in electricity use a year -- "fairly significant savings on the network backbone itself," he said. Verizon has installed fuel cells in its switching and training facility in Garden City, N.Y., and at a site in Missouri, he said. It has put solar panels at eight cell sites in California and is looking to "deploy solar technology to augment our backup power supply in many remote locations."

ICT produces 2 percent of global emissions, but it also can help with the other 98 percent, he said, quoting the Climate Group. The technology can reduce global emissions by 15 percent by 2020 and 22 percent in the U.S. alone, he said. The wide deployment of broadband can be a significant enabler of energy efficiency, Heffron said. The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy estimates that making broadband available everywhere could improve the economy's energy efficiency as much as 50 percent, he said.

Focusing on the environment "really makes economic sense" for the ICT industries, said David Lewis, Nokia Siemens' marketing director for North America. The industry is moving away from the "old concept that deploying green solutions is going to be expensive," he said. Among trends driving the greening of ICT is pressure from company stakeholders, greater expectations of environmental sustainability from consumers, investors looking at companies' environmental ranking and "increasingly tight regulations around emissions," he said. It's particularly important to have "environmental solutions" for markets in developing countries, because that's "where some of the biggest environmental challenges exist," Lewis said. -- *Dinesh Kumar*

Wireline

CenturyLink told the FCC not to wait for a comprehensive Universal Service Fund overhaul in the National Broadband Plan to fix the high-cost support mechanism for "non-rural" carriers that serve high-cost areas with too many lines to be considered "rural" under the statutory definition. In meetings Tuesday with aides to Commissioners Michael Copps and Robert McDowell, CenturyLink said the current rulemaking responding to a 2005 remand by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals "offers an opportunity to move in the right direction toward more targeted support that is used for broadband deployment," an ex-parte filing said. The company fears it could take "several years" until the FCC adopts a broadband support mechanism, it said. The commission is expected to issue a further notice of proposed rulemaking soon about the remand (CD Dec 2 p8).