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Verizon Wireless on Friday said it will immediately stop imposing data speed restrictions on first responders throughout the West Coast and Hawaii after facing intense criticism for reducing service to firefighters battling California's largest-ever wildfire. The telecommunication giant also said it will move forward in the coming weeks on a plan that will feature unlimited data without restrictions for public safety officials.

The announcement comes in a summer of epic fires in California and as Hawaii is grappling with torrential rainfall, flooding and power outages stemming from [Hurricane Lane](#). Verizon's plan, which was discussed among state Assembly members during a committee meeting on Friday, was made public on the heels of revelations that [the company slowed the speed](#) of Santa Clara County firefighters' data as they helped battle the massive Mendocino Complex fire in July.

The incident grabbed headlines and sparked outrage this week when Santa Clara County Fire Chief Anthony Bowden chronicled the incident in an addendum to a federal lawsuit seeking to overturn the Federal Communications Commission's repeal of net neutrality rules. "This was not a fire drill," Assemblyman Marc Levine (D-San Rafael) said during the Natural Disaster Response, Recovery, and Rebuilding committee meeting on Friday. "I think we were all surprised that such an incident could occur. I'm grateful that Verizon has recognized they need to change the way they do business."

Dave Hickey, Verizon vice president of business and government sales, told lawmakers that the company would roll out a new \$37.99 service plan for public safety personnel that will feature unlimited data with no caps and will automatically give them priority access on congested networks. The company also will remove throttling — which he referred to as speed-capping — for emergency responders during future natural disasters that may occur nationwide, Hickey said.

Verizon officials said this week that Santa Clara County Fire Department's plan featured unlimited high-speed wireless data, but data speeds were reduced when the agency reached a specific threshold, as is customary on their service plans. However, the company has a practice to remove data speed restrictions for emergency responders — regardless of the plan they have chosen — in emergency situations. Verizon called the situation a "customer support mistake" and has apologized. "In supporting first responders in the Mendocino fire, we didn't live up to our own promise of service and performance excellence when our process failed some first responders on the line, battling a massive California wildfire," Mike Maiorana, Verizon senior vice president of public sector, said in a statement. "For that, we are truly sorry. And we're making every effort to ensure that it never happens again."

Bowden wrote in the addendum to the lawsuit that the data-slowness during the Mendocino Complex fire specifically hampered OES 5262, a department command vehicle that acts as a mobile emergency operations center and requires "near-real-time information exchange" to coordinate resources and staff during emergencies like large wildfires. "Dated or stale information regarding the availability or need for resources can slow response times and render them far less effective," Bowden wrote. "Resources could be deployed to the wrong fire, the wrong part of the fire, or fail to be

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deployed at all. Even small delays in response translate into devastating effects, including loss of property, and, in some cases, loss of life.”

Fire crews that worked in the command vehicle faced email delays and challenges updating web-based documents with critical information about deployment because of the data-slowness, which impeded their ability to communicate with one another, fire officials said. Assemblywoman Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) said she’s eager to hear how other internet service providers plan to tackle this issue, opening the door for further discussions. Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) was concise in her request. “I’m not going to point fingers, but I don’t want this to happen again,” she said. – ***Los Angeles Times***; **also, in *sfgate.com*, San Jose to join lawsuit against FCC on Verizon throttling**

Walt Disney Co. has been the consistent leader among media and entertainment companies in the Management Top 250 ranking, but Netflix Inc. has made the biggest gains. At No. 53 overall, Walt Disney was the highest-ranked company in the industry sector in the latest analysis. Although the Management Top 250 was first published in December, it was calculated back to 2012. Walt Disney has topped the media and entertainment sector each year.

Over that same period, Netflix has been among the biggest gainers of all companies analyzed for the ranking. It was No. 175 overall in the most recent ranking. In 2012, it was far from even making the list of the top 250, ranked No. 475 among all companies analyzed. Since then, its gains have been powered by increases in innovation, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement and development.

The Management Top 250, compiled by the Drucker Institute, analyzes the management effectiveness of major U.S. companies. It is based on 37 indicators that track performance in five categories that reflect the core principles of the late business guru Peter Drucker. Mr. Drucker influenced generations of business leaders with his writings, including a regular column in The Wall Street Journal. The five categories are innovation, customer satisfaction, social responsibility, financial strength, and employee engagement and development. – ***Wall Street Journal***

