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# Telecom firms come to flood victims' aid

VS Indo Asian News Service IANS India Private Limited June 22, 2013

New Delhi, June 22 (IANS) To help people stranded in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Western Uttar Pradesh, some telecom service providers have begun allowing free hotline services, extending credit limits of customers and setting up helpline centres.

Airtel has made hotline service 55100 Emergency Alerts free for 30 days for all its subscribers who are stuck in these three states. Every alert will automatically include the location information.

"The 55100 service will be given free of charge for 30 days and may be extended if the situation on the ground does not improve," Sunjyiev Mahajan, Chairman, TBM Technologies Pvt Ltd, the company behind 55100 Emergency Alerts said.

All that a subscriber needs to do is dial 55100 and follow the instructions. The service works on every handset and does not need any smartphone, internet, data, GPS and GPRS. It even works with zero balance in the subscriber's mobile phone account.

Vodafone India has set up 19 help desks at locations, which have been severely affected by using its distributors and service points so that affected people can reach out to the world outside.

"Two helpline centers have also been set up at the Jolly Grant and Sahasdhara Helipads. Free phone service is being provided to the affected people, who are brought to these helipads after evacuation," the company said in a statement.

Vodafone is also providing talk-time credit to affected customers who are unable to top up credit due to the non-availability of recharge facilities in impacted locations.

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