

an app that vaulted to the top of the charts before and during the past week's hurricanes was criticized by many people, including tv stations in south Florida. How did Zello do? Is it the emergency contacts 'walkie-talkie' app it's purported to be? Is it something you'll want to use again?

I'm doing a post-hurricane review of Zello to find out.

the story runs 1:31

standard outcue

supers:

voice of: Susan Bell/ Jacksonville, FL

Jamey Tucker 120-130

ftp:184.168.202.1

kfdxtv Smarhome#1
waaytv Smarhome#31
wpsdtv Smarhome#6
wrcbtv Smarhome#3
wkrntv Smarhome#2
wzvntv Smarhome#7
kohdtv Smarhome#51
wboctv Smarhome#16

new dropbox link

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0tkldw0ratqpagi/AAAbdKEnaYZQjcOFMWNyFliwa?dl=0h>

password for whatthetech.tv access

Samsung

ANCHOR INTRO

AN APP MADE POPULAR BY HURRICANE IRMA WAS USED THOUSANDS OF TIMES BY PEOPLE WHO WERE CAUGHT IN THE STORM AND BY PEOPLE TRYING TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM.

ZELLO, A WALKIE-TALKIE APP WAS SUPPOSED TO WORK EVEN WHEN THE POWER WENT OUT. BUT DID IT WORK? OUR CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY REPORTER JAMEY TUCKER SET OUT TO SEE IF IT WORKS.

PACKAGE

"hey, how are you doing?"

I had two friends who downloaded the Zello app. One in Jacksonville, Florida and the other in Tampa.

"I'm on a data plan so it worked for me. I'm not sure how it did with hotspots but it was good for me"

my contact in Tampa has not been on the app Sunday. I don't know if its because of the app, the cell towers or if he's just busy.

Zellow, works over the internet. Either through wifi or cell towers. Both friends lost power, which meant they lost wifi in their homes. Did they stay connected with anyone?

" I have 15 people i've stayed in touch with. We created a hurricane group and I've touched base with all of them today"

the app worked because most cell towers remained standing. Looking at the outage maps for AT&T and Verizon showed only sporadic outages and those companies work as quickly as possible to restore service.

But Zello uses such a small amount of data, these simple quick voice messages can often slip through with just minimal data connections.

it also served a great service by sharing important information through channels such as road closures and damage and curfews.

"volusia county, 10pm to 7pm county wide.

So for most users, Zello did just fine an advantage it has over similar apps is that more than a million people downloaded it in the last week including some of your friends. They have it on their phone and accounts, which is important. Keep that in mind for the future.

That's What the Tech? I'm Jamey Tucker

ANCHOR TAG

ZELLO DEVELOPERS CLAIM THE APP WAS DOWNLOADED WELL OVER A MILLION TIMES IN RECENT DAYS AND HAS OVER A MILLION REGISTERED USERS. IT'S A FREE APP FOR IPHONES AND ANDROID DEVICES.

WEB STORY

As power outages hit most of south Florida as hurricane Irma hit the state this weekend, residents there were looking for a way to stay connected with friends and family. Late last week everyone seemed to be downloading a walkie-talkie app that was being shared around the country on Facebook and Twitter.

"Zello" claims to keep people connected with short audio text messages even when power is knocked out. It uses either wi-fi or cellular data connections. It was first hailed, then criticized for doing what it's advertised to do. Hurricane Irma was an opportunity to see how, and if it worked.

I've had a Zello account since it first launched years ago but haven't used it in a situation with massive power outages. I downloaded it again Friday and added a few friends in Florida. One friend in Tampa, the other in Jacksonville. Both areas had widespread power outages Sunday and Monday.

I reached out to my friend Susan who lives in Jacksonville. Monday morning she had lost power but the app was still working.

"I'm on a data plan so it worked for me," she said. "I'm not sure how it did with hotspots but it was good for me."

I checked the outage maps for both AT&T and Verizon in the Jacksonville area and it showed just sporadic signal problems and there were only one or two reports in all of Florida of cell towers that had been knocked down.

Zello claims to work even when cell towers are overwhelmed with customers trying to go online and make phone calls. The messages are small, data size wise, and will often be able to get through when connections are difficult. If the message isn't able to go through immediately the company says it will get passed along as soon as its able. Also the messages do not disappear if the user is not online or has the app opened. They'll be able to hear and respond to the message the next time they open the app.

My friend Susan told me she'd been using it all weekend. " I have 15 people I've stayed in touch with. We created a hurricane group and I've touched base with all of them today."

I also found the app to provide a great resource for people affected by the storm through groups or channels. Often during the weekend I kept tabs on a Hurricane Irma in South Florida group with over 1,000 people connected. Moderators and others were sharing information about the availability of gas, road closures, power outages, evacuation routes and curfews.

There are similar apps in both iTunes and the Google Play Store but one advantage Zello now has over those apps is the number of people who've downloaded it and created accounts. The more friends who have the app in use, the more helpful it is to stay connected and informed.

Zello App: www.zello.com