NTRC

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LS Grayson Stephens demonstrating use of GMDSS radios.

NTRC concludes GMDSS Training Session at Barrouallie

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission held its fifth and final Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) training in the town of Barrouallie located in the south leeward district of the country.

The training session was conducted at Learning Resource Centre by Mr. Grayson Stephens, Leading seaman of the SVG Coastguard. In his presentation, Mr. Stephens indicated that cellular phones are only capable of communicating with land based cellular towers up to twenty-four (24) nautical miles, however, GMDSS radios can communicate up to one hundred (100) nautical miles with the coastguard or the nearest vessel with GMDSS enabled radio. He added that a cellular phone is not ideal because based on your location, you may not be able to communicate.

Also, in attendance at the training was Senior Fisheries Assistant, Shamal Connell. Mr. Connell outlined the importance of such radios as their features are useful in saving lives, additionally, he advised the fishermen to absorb the information and source one of the radios for themselves.

At the end of the GMDSS training, the NTRC drew a raffle for a brand new GMDSS radio. The lucky winner of the GMDSS radio was Mr. Randolph Dickson. The raffle consisted of entries from each registered participant of the five (5) GMDSS training sessions that the NTRC held this year.

The GMDSS system was implemented by the NTRC to facilitate an improved and efficient means of communication at sea. A person with a GMDSS enabled handset can send a distress call with a push of a button and alert the coastguard and other vessels having GMDSS radios.

Source: NTRC

Dealing with Cyberbullies

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying refers to practice of using technology to harass, or bully, someone else. Bullies used to be restricted to methods such as physical intimidation, postal mail, or the telephone. Now, developments in electronic media offer forums such as email, instant messaging, web pages, and digital photos to add to the arsenal. Computers, cell phones, and tablets are current tools that are being used to conduct an old practice.

How can you protect yourself or your children?

Teach your children good online habits - Explain the risks of technology, and teach children how to be responsible online. Reduce their risk of becoming cyberbullies by setting guidelines for and monitoring their use of the internet and other electronic media

Keep lines of communication open - Regularly talk to your children about their online activities so that they feel comfortable telling you if they are being victimized.

Limit availability of personal information - Limiting the number of people who have access to contact information or details about interests, habits, or employment reduces exposure to bullies that you or your child do not know. This may limit the risk of becoming a victim and may make it easier to identify the bully if you or your child are victimized.

US-Cert

Register now!

Registration for NTRC's i² Competition closes on November 4, 2016.

The registration stage for the NTRC's Ideas and Innovations Competition will come to a close on Friday, November 4, 2016. The registration period which begun on September 16, 2016 gave students adequate time to think of innovative ideas or mobile applications that will improve the services of the local private sector industry. Students interested in registering can do so by visiting the NTRC's website for a registration form or download the "NTRC's I Squared App" - an Android available on the Google Play Store.

The preliminary judging phase is scheduled for November 14—25 where participating groups are required to make their first presentations to a panel of judges.

Source: NTRC

Caribbean utility regulators meet in Jamaica

October 19, 2016. More than 200 delegates from 20 countries are expected in the island of Jamaica for the 14th annual Organization of Caribbean Utility Regulators (OOCUR) conference, which takes place at the Secrets Resort and Spa in Montego Bay from October 26 to 28.

Chairman of the organizing committee of OOCUR, Albert Gordon said that developments and new trends in various sectors will also be looked at with a view to adapting applicable ones to suit their respective countries. Amongst the list of presenters for the three (3) day conference is NTRC's Director, Mr. Apollo Knights who will present a case study on "Utilizing a Universal Service Fund to create an ecosystem for local content production and delivery in St. Vincent and the Grenadines"

Source: JIS

Free training & startup funding opportunities for Dominican mobile app developers

Mobile entrepreneurs around Dominica and the rest of the Caribbean can now apply for places in the region's premier pre-accelerator program.

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC), the Dominica mobile hub for PitchIT Caribbean is now accepting applications for entrepreneurs from Dominica to take part in an intense training course designed to get the entrepreneurs mobile application from idea to reality. Participation in this pre-accelerator program is completely free and will provide entrepreneurs with the opportunity to gain startup funding.

Throughout the process, emphasis will be placed on real-world business-building, identifying key elements such as target markets and customers. The six-week training will be supported by virtual training sessions and face-to-face practical coaching workshops, led by PitchIT Caribbean's local mHubs in Dominica, the NTRC.

The pre-accelerator program culminates with the PitchIT Caribbean Startup Challenge, scheduled for December in Trinidad and Tobago. Participants will have the opportunity to enter the challenge and compete against a field of the region's top mobile application startups. The winners of the challenge move into the acceleration phase to help them develop their startup.

Commenting on the opportunity for the Dominican technology industry, Executive Director of the NTRC, Craig Nesty believes that the training opportunity is integral for local mobile startup companies, as the training provides invaluable experiences to cultivate Dominica mobile application developers for the global market.

This is the second cycle of the of the mobile startup pre accelerator training in Dominica hosted by the NTRC. In the first cycle held from February – May 2016, five (5) mobile startup companies participated in the training, which included a CodeSprintHackathon. Cycle 1 culminated with NTRC taking one mobile startup company, the LinkUp_ Group, founded by Daniel Pond and Irus Toussaint to Montego bay Jamaica to participate in the PitchIT Caribbean Startup Challenge.

PitchIT Caribbean is a program aimed at enhancing the mobile app development ecosystem across CARICOM. It is designed to accelerate mobile app entrepreneurs through the start-up life cycle, which runs from ideation to pitch, from pitch to market and from market to maturity. It currently supports 4 Hubs, one each in Barbados, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Source: Dominica News Online

ECTEL Telecommunications Ministers Approve New Legislation

Castries, Saint Lucia – 17th October 2016. The Council of Ministers of the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) concluded its thirty-fourth regular meeting in Saint Lucia on Friday 14th October 2016. At that meeting, the Council approved new Regulations which are aimed at enhancing the environment for competition in the telecommunications sector in the ECTEL Member States.

The new Regulations address (i) consumer protection, which among other provisions, guard against unfair restrictions on consumer choices in services; (ii) submarine cable regulations, which set out conditions for fair access to submarine cable capacity; (iii) access to network infrastructure and wholesale services regulations, which impose conditions on licensees holding significant market power to share their networks; (iv) regulations and guidelines on the conduct of market analyses.

The Council discussed the current work being undertaken by the ECTEL and the NTRCs to address the impact of the Cable & Wireless/Columbus merger on the markets, and approved recommendations on new licences for telecommunications service providers.

The Ministers also approved the work plan and budget to fund the operations of the national Commissions and the ECTEL Directorate for the financial year 1st October 2016 to 30th September 2017.

The ECTEL Council of Ministers approved the sum of EC$10,00.00 as a contribution from the Member States to address the emergency rehabilitation of the people of Haiti who lost lives, property and livelihoods following the passage of hurricane Matthew in September 2016. In 2010, the ECTEL Council of Ministers also approved a financial contribution to Haiti following the destruction caused by the massive earthquake.

Incoming Chairman of the Council, Honourable Guy Joseph of Saint Lucia, stated that with the rapid changes in the technology and sector, both the regulator and the telecommunications service providers must adjust their business practices in order to better serve the consumers in the region.

Source: ECTEL

Eastern Caribbean works to promote broader usage of electronic payments

BASSETERRE, St Kitts -- A recent electronic payments conference and workshop aimed at promoting broader usage of electronic payments in the Eastern Caribbean and the possibility of reducing the usage of cash was held at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) headquarters in St Kitts on Monday, October 17m 2016. The workshop was hosted by the ECCB and VISA School of Public Policy.
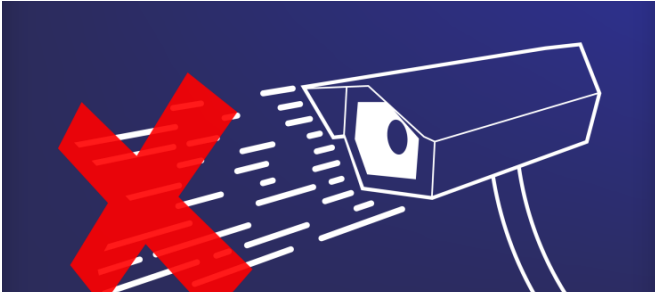
Prime minister and minister of finance, Dr Timothy Harris, noted that the workshop was timely and important. He congratulated the ECCB for taking the initiative to host such important discussions.

"It is for us in the sub region, a time where we can be considered to be at a critical juncture and so we need to assess where we are now and where we need to position ourselves in the development of the financial services sector," Harris said. "It is therefore important for all stakeholders to keep abreast of global developments in the financial services especially those developments related to e-money, virtual currencies and other innovations that have significant implications for the business environment in our currency union.

The prime minister said that there needs to be some sort of measure to get more people involved in utilizing the financial services.

"It is estimated that about two billion people around the world do not have access to basic financial service," he said, while noting that the issue of financial inclusion was discussed during his recent meetings in Washington DC. "Part of that discussion was how do we enable and empower more people across the world to become involved in the formal systems. Luckily for us in the currency union we have a different lived reality in that our people, the large measure, are not at the periphery of engagement in the financial services sector but are very active participants in that sector."

Source: Caribbean News Now via ICT Pulse

Senators ask FCC to investigate Stingray surveillance tech

October 6, 2016. A group of Democratic senators asked the Federal Communications Commission to investigate cell site simulators like Stingrays to determine if the surveillance devices used by local law enforcement agencies are disrupting cellphone service for ordinary consumers and 911 calls. The senators are also asking the FCC to look into whether Stingray use disproportionately affects people of color.

Cell site simulators, commonly known as IMSI catchers or by the brand name Stingray, pose as normal cellphone towers. When nearby phones connect, the simulators can capture their unique ID numbers, track their locations and intercept the contents of calls and messages. Law enforcement agencies tend to be secretive about their use of Stingrays, but several civil rights groups, including Center for Media Justice, ColorOfChange.org and New America's Open Technology Institute, claimed in August that the Baltimore Police Department's use of the devices was inhibiting emergency calls and unfairly targeting communities of color.

The organizations complained to the FCC, asking it to intervene. According to the complaint (PDF), BPD used Stingrays 4,700 times over the course of nine years to investigate everything from kidnappings to petty thefts. Because the devices affect any phone within a 200-500 meter radius, it could absorb not only a suspect's calls but also calls to emergency services, suicide hotlines and other important resources. The complaint also cites USA Today reporting that shows BPD most commonly used Stingrays in black communities.

Source: Tech Crunch

Facebook bucks censorship in favor of newsworthy or public interest images and stories

October 21, 2016 .Facebook is moving forward with an updated policy when it comes to figuring out what to display users in their News Feed or what's shared in general. After receiving feedback from users and partners over "recent weeks," the social networking company will no longer put as great of emphasis on censorship than it had previously. Instead, it will show images and stories that are deemed "newsworthy, significant, or important to the public interest — even if they might otherwise violate [Facebook's] standards."

This issue recently came to light following Facebook's censorship of the iconic "Napalm Girl" image in September and a subsequent mea culpa where the company said it recognized "the history and global importance of this image in documenting a particular moment in time." In the past few months, the social network had been a lightning rod of criticism over how it polices what's on its site, which is now used by more than 1 billion people daily.

Other cases that come to mind include allegations levied against the company over a perceived bias against conservative ideas, which has led to CEO Mark Zuckerberg meeting with conservative activists to explain that his company does no such thing. Also, we mustn't forget that people are also in arms over Facebook's censorship against women's nipples. Just this week, it blocked a cancer awareness video because it featured cartoon breasts.

Under this proposed policy change, the company could start displaying content based on its news value, even if it depicts otherwise questionable imagery.

Of course this may lead to a slippery slope, but it seems that Facebook aims to err on the side of free speech instead of relenting to the sometimes prudish opinions of everyone in the world.

Source: Venturebeat

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