

Gator's Rant

Thanks a lot KTRH Radio 740 AM

When the lights went out, your station suddenly had an audience share that broke all records. Nearly 100% of the people in your listening area were without electricity. A hurricane was howling around us. So we turned to our radios. You have never had an audience that big, and never will again.

Who were all of these listeners? They were us folks who remained behind and braved the storm. Most of us knew what we were doing – the fact that only a couple of people died in the storm itself is proof. We took whatever precautions our situations called for, battened down the hatches, and rode out the onslaught.

So when we tuned in to your station, what did we hear? One host after another telling us we were idiots, ignorant, and more for daring to defy the advice to evacuate. I do not know why you guys at NewsRadio 740 decided to bitch-slap the very people who comprised your unprecedented audience, but that's exactly what you did.

This was your big chance to win over a new group of listeners: Us Bohemian bastards who live near you along the coast, where we sip cocktails and eat catamarans. Maybe some of us would stick, and even be a welcome addition to the choleric geezers and sweaty salesmen who comprise your "regular" audience. All you had to do to win our hearts was give us the truth. Ask a few questions, check a few facts. But when we needed you to shoot straight, your guys weren't up to the challenge. Instead they read press releases and provided a soapbox for every petty bureaucrat in the region, but couldn't seem to make the emergency transition from Hannity to reality. A lot of the information you *were* passing along turned out to be incorrect. That's because you didn't do what news people are trained to do in Journalism 101 – check your facts. This is usually done using a telephone. The most junior person on the payroll is generally nominated. And don't try to say that you rushed to get vital information out to the public - it only takes a minute or two, and what about the time and gas wasted by your suffering listeners because of your poor reporting?

Hundreds of people burned precious gas to go to FEMA centers they heard about on KTRH that turned out to not be there. People who lived next door to police stations and fire stations expected their power to be among the first restored, only to discover that Michael Berry didn't know WTF he was talking about - that police and fire departments all have massive generators and are *not* the first places to get their power restored. These people (for example the neighborhood around the Dickinson PD went over 2 weeks before power was finally restored) could have bought generators, but didn't – thanks to your station's bad information. Meanwhile others, assured that they would be waiting 2-3 weeks for electricity, went and bought expensive generators, only to have power back the next day! My advice to you guys is that if you don't have a clue about something, don't let some hack like Mike Berry make shit up. Google it and learn a little bit about it before you start spewing bullshit that affects people's lives. Your wrong information added to the suffering of a lot of people. Worse, your hosts' arrogant attitude toward callers who pointed out discrepancies in your reporting was infuriating and alienating. I was relieved to get my power on so I could turn you off, forever.

The tragedy that was Hurricane Ike presented an opportunity for KTRH to do three vital things: First, perform an extremely valuable public service in a time of need; Second, live up to your "NewsRadio" billing; and Third, increase your base audience. You squandered the best opportunity you'll ever get. Instead, your people bit the hands that feed them. They authoritatively and repeatedly gave out bad information and repudiated anyone who tried to straighten them out. Your hosts were also unable to conceal their political biases, which kept leaking out like slime from a faulty septic tank. Overall, KTRH came across as uninformed smirking blowhards. Next hurricane, I have a new plan to get the facts that will be just as reliable as 740 AM and less aggravating: I intend to leave the radio off and consult my Magic 8-Ball instead!



GATOR