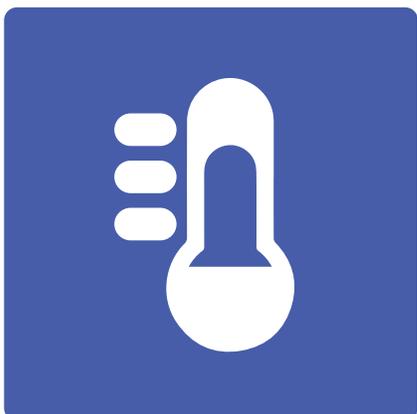


Storm Communications Guide for Public Power Utilities



Storm Communications Guide for Public Power Utilities

Prepared by the American Public Power Association

APPA thanks the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to this guide:

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The American Public Power Association represents not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities that power homes, businesses and streets in nearly 2,000 towns and cities, serving 48 million Americans. With no divided loyalties, these utilities are focused on a single mission — providing reliable electricity at a reasonable price, while protecting the environment. These public power utilities generate, or buy, electricity from diverse sources.

More at www.PublicPower.org.

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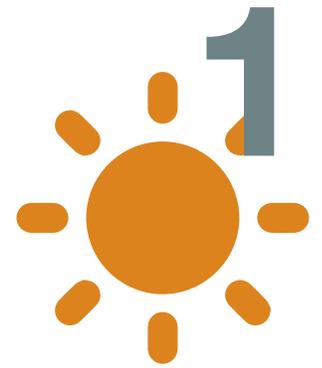
When bad weather hits, causing widespread power outages, utilities are preoccupied with restoring power. However, communicating effectively with a variety of audiences — customers, employees, board members, policymakers, media, state and federal agencies, and APPA staff — is also of the utmost importance and cannot take a backseat. The mantra should be “unity of effort, unity of messaging.”

The American Public Power Association (APPA) offers tips and best practices to communicate effectively before, during, and after a storm.

These tips are based on what public power utilities across the country are actually doing to prepare for adverse weather events.

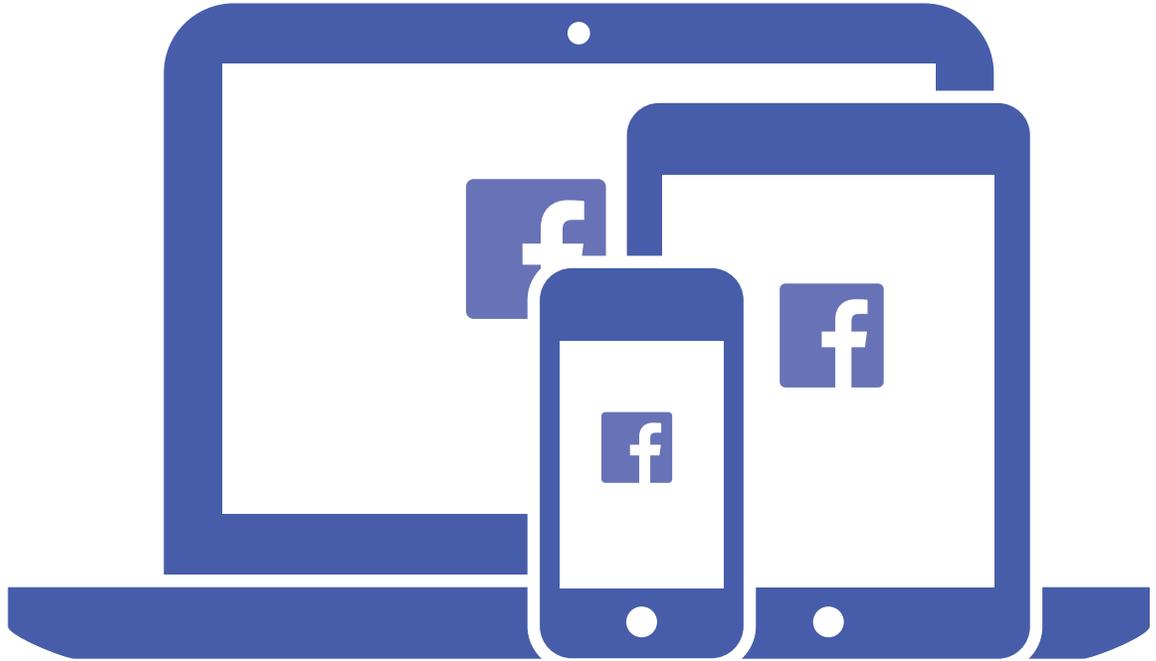


Before the Storm



With advanced weather tracking, storms and other weather-related crises are seldom a total surprise. You usually have some indication that bad weather is coming and can prepare before the storm is even on the horizon. However, as the dark clouds loom, things can get frantic. So plan and prepare during “blue sky” times. Here are a few things to consider.

- Does your storm/crisis team include at least one communications professional, who is constantly looped in on key developments?
- Have you defined who can speak to the media about the storm? Have you authorized specific people to post updates to your website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other channels?
- Do you have general safety messages for social media, radio, or news releases? These can be prepared before a storm for repeat use and cover topics such as generator safety, home emergency kits, and post-storm electrical safety.
- Do you have information, processes, and systems in place to communicate with your customers by text, phone, or email?
- Do you have a website and social media presence (at least Twitter and Facebook) and have you asked customers to follow you so they can get updates in case of emergencies?
- Is your media contact list up-to-date? Don’t wait until the storm is looming to double check that you have the right phone numbers and email addresses for your local newspaper, TV, and radio stations.



- Have you reached out to your local or state emergency management offices or governor’s office to identify communications professionals who can help you in an emergency?
- Have you kept your employees informed about where to find necessary updates and procedures?

The Florida Municipal Electric Association has offered a book of “Evergreen Facebook Posts” to member utilities on a range of topics, including storm safety. Here are a few sample posts:

- Communities, families, and individuals should know what to do in the event of a storm and where to seek shelter. Are you prepared? #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- In the event of a storm, your family should be ready to evacuate their home and take refuge in public shelters and know how to care for their basic medical needs. Are you prepared? #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower

- In the event of a storm, you should be ready to be self-sufficient for at least three days. This may mean providing for your own shelter, first-aid, food water, and sanitation. Are you prepared? #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- In the event of a storm when community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances, other warning methods, such as sirens or telephone calls, also are used. #BePrepared #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Almost every year, people along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts evacuate in the face of approaching hurricanes. #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- If you evacuate to a shelter, make arrangements for your pets. Did you know that many public shelters do not allow pets? #BePrepared #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- Every Floridian should develop a family preparedness plan well in advance of a storm threat. Did you know that you need to store at least a three-day supply of water for each person in your household. Stored water should be changed every six months. #BePrepared #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- Do you live in a vulnerable area—mobile home, an area that floods frequently, on a barrier island, or near the coast? Do you have a plan if you are ordered to evacuate? Here is a tip: fill your car with gas and bring extra cash. Banks may be closed, and ATMs may not work. #BePrepared #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower
- Here is a family preparedness tip for staying home during a hurricane: Do not use candles or open flames as a light source. #BePrepared #BuildingStrongCommunities #FLPublicPower

**Keep APPA's
Disaster Reponse
Team in the loop
by using the
following hashtag:**

#PublicPower

Keys Energy Services sent out these two pre-storm press releases, which are good examples you can refer to. In addition to using social media, a press release can help your utility provide in-depth information on response efforts, safety tips for customers, and contact information to report outages. The media can then use this information during broadcast to alert customers.

NEWS
08/28/15

Media Contact: Jamie Smith
Phone number

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KEYS ENERGY SERVICES PRE-STORM GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

KEY WEST – With Tropical Storm Erika predicted to impact the Florida Keys, Keys Energy Services (KEYS) asks that you take the following safety precautions:

- Turn your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest setting and keep the door closed. If the power goes out, this will keep food fresh longer.
- Unplug your television before lowering or taking down your outside antenna. Use extra caution and beware of power lines, which may be nearby.
- Disconnect all electric equipment.
- Keep flashlights, battery-operated radios, extra batteries, canned food, and bottled water handy.
- If you own a swimming pool, turn off all pumps and filters. If you don't, water from the approaching storm can damage them.
- **If evacuating the Florida Keys, KEYS recommends all customers shut the main power off to their home at the main circuit breaker to avoid fires caused by rising waters.**
- If your power goes out, use flashlights instead of candles or kerosene lamps. Be careful cooking over flames, a gust of wind through a door or window could start a fire and the fire department may not be able to respond.
- If you own a generator, be sure to follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Make sure your generator is in a well-ventilated location. Plug appliances directly into the generator. Turn your electricity off at the fuse box in order to prevent safety problems for KEYS workers. Additionally, remember to turn the generator off before turning your house power back on.
- Do not touch fallen or low-hanging wires and anything they may be in contact with. A seemingly harmless wire may still be energized. Also, stay away from puddles where downed lines may have landed.
- Keep telephone lines clear for police and emergency services. Please call KEYS only to report downed power lines, or to let us know that power is out in your home after others in your area have been energized. KEYS' 24-hour Dispatch Center can be reached at (305) 295-1010.

###

NEWS
08/28/15

Media Contact: Jamie Smith
Phone number

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KEYS ENERGY SERVICES PRE-STORM – WHAT TO EXPECT

KEY WEST – Keys Energy Services (KEYS) is prepared to restore service as quickly as possible if facilities are damaged by Tropical Storm Erika.

Restoration efforts will begin as soon as winds diminish.

KEYS has established priorities for storm restoration that are intended to emphasize health, safety, and essential community services and to restore service in a manner that will affect the greatest number of customers first.

Here's what will happen:

Before the Storm:

- Line and electrical crews will be in the field working until winds exceed 35 miles per hour. At that time, all crews will be called in from the field. If power outages occur at this time, KEYS will not attempt to restore power. All restoration will take place when the storm has passed.
- Essential utility employees will be on standby at KEYS' generating facilities on Stock Island to begin the restoration process immediately after winds diminish.

Local Generation:

- KEYS has 109 megawatts of local generation available if the Transmission Line/TIELINE is severed. If the generating units weather the storm without damage, the units will be started as soon as winds die down.

Dealing with Customers' Calls and Power Outages After the Storm:

- KEYS personnel will accept phone calls from customers reporting electrical hazards such as downed power lines or sparking lines, as well as customers reporting outages. This information will be immediately sorted and prioritized for field crews. In order to keep the process as efficient as possible, we ask that customers call only one time to report damage or an outage.
- After reports have been prioritized, employees from the engineering and meter services sections will survey affected areas to assess damage and to determine equipment, materials, and personnel necessary to restore power in areas.
- Employees from the electrical and line sections will begin restoring power.
- KEYS has a number of contracts and agreements in place so that emergency supplies and additional crews from other utilities will quickly mobilize to assist in the restoration effort, as necessary.
- KEYS crews and crews from other utilities will work as quickly as possible to restore power. Emergency services such as the hospital, the police and sheriff's offices, and radio stations will receive top priority. The time required to restore power is largely due to the extent of damage to our distribution system.
- If the TIELINE is severed, local general will be available to supply power. However, customers should expect KEYS to call for conservation. Rotating power outages are also a possibility.

###



Storm on the Horizon

Once it becomes clear that a weather event will affect your community, it is time to activate your communications plan. Here are few things to consider:

1. Make sure utility employees as well as boards members/commissioners are **fully informed** about storm preparations.

Consider this sample communication from ElectriCities of North Carolina.

TO: ElectriCities Board of Directors, NC Mayors, NC City Managers, NC Utility Directors, NCEMPA/NCMPA1 Board of Commissioners, ElectriCities Employees

ElectriCities emergency assistance staff continues to monitor the development of Hurricane Irene. Over the past 24 hours, the storm has shifted to the west. The current forecast is showing the storm will cause heavy winds and rain throughout eastern North Carolina on Saturday. We will continue to monitor the storm track over the next several days.

Operations staff continues to work with Progress Energy and Duke Energy site personnel on their preparations at the jointly owned units. The plant will follow NRC operating guidelines throughout the storm and our staff will continue to be in contact with Progress Energy and Duke Energy staff.

Both the NC Public Power and ElectriCities websites have been updated with tips for storm readiness. We will also provide information through Twitter.

2. Reach out to the governor and/or state **emergency management personnel** to confirm contacts.
3. Send out **pre-storm press releases** to the media with safety messages, what you've done to prepare, and an indication of how you'll keep them informed as the situation evolves.
4. If your utility is part of the **Public Power Mutual Aid Network**, be sure to let board members, customers, and media know about neighboring utility crews standing by to help as needed. If your utility is not yet part of this national network, it's never too late to join — email MutualAid@PublicPower.org today to learn more.
5. Send out **pre-storm communications to customers, with safety tips** and resources as well as directions on how to contact the utility to report issues and get updates. Social media can be particularly effective here. Connect with important accounts like @FEMA and @Readygov and your local government accounts on Twitter.

Below is a sample tweet from ElectriCities of North Carolina.



6. Assess **pre-storm news coverage**, and consider whether the media has all the information it needs to accurately cover the storm.
7. Prepare your communications team to track and respond to all **media inquiries**. Designate your primary spokesperson and make it clear who is authorized to speak to the media.
8. Consider how to handle logistics for staff if you are looking at **overnight or weekend** operations.



During the Storm

Once the storm hits, customers will suffer through outages. The media will want more information than you can provide. But keep calm and remember the following:

1. **Keep utility employees informed** and up to date. They are your utility's most powerful ambassadors and will take your messages to their friends and neighbors in the community.
2. **Keep your utility's website updated.** It is most effective to put alerts, news releases, and other important storm/outage information right on your web homepage.
3. **Monitor local media coverage** to make sure reporters are getting it right. If not, contact the media and let them know, offering accurate information.
4. **Monitor and engage on social media** — post quick updates on Facebook and Twitter and try to respond to any customer comments on these platforms. If you don't control the message on social media, others will and it may be to your detriment.
5. Maintain contact with public information personnel in all **local emergency management agencies.**
6. **Acknowledge your customers' communications preferences** and try to deliver updates in multiple ways:
 - Web
 - Telephone messages
 - Recorded messages
 - SMS
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - YouTube

Here's an example from ElectriCities of North Carolina:



7. **Document the situation** — deploy photographers and/or videographers to capture damage, restoration, utility activities, and customer interaction. Share the visuals on social media and provide them to your local media as well.
8. **Track and verify** as much as you can — crews deployed, outages, areas hardest hit, and mutual aid assistance. Media wants facts and stats and you want to be able to help them.

Kissimmee Utility Authority in Florida offers the following media relations “dos and don’ts” that can come in handy in an emergency.

- Do respond in a sincere, direct, and cooperative manner; keep it short.
- Do listen carefully to the question — if it’s negative, answer in the positive if possible.
- Do stick to the facts.
- Do speak from the viewpoint of the public’s interest.
- Do say “I don’t know, but I’ll try to find out for you.”
- Do know that everything you say can be quoted — before, during and after your interview or news conference.
- Do not say something you don’t want to disclose. “Off the record” does not work.
- Do not speculate or guess, avoid “what if” questions.
- Do not argue, get angry, ramble, joke or act superior; avoid jargon; keep it simple.
- Do not use the term “no comment;” offer a brief explanation like “that hasn’t been determined” or “we cannot disclose that information.”
- Do not try to fool a reporter or indicate you know something you don’t, be honest.
- Do not call a reporter by name in a news conference that’s being taped — it may keep competing broadcasters from using your answer.



After the Storm

Real electrical safety hazards manifest after a storm has passed. Utility equipment is damaged. Lines are down. Basements are flooded. It is critical to keep safety top-of-mind. Here are some things to consider regarding post-storm communications:

1. **Continue to deliver timely and verified restoration updates** and status reports through all channels to customers, the news media, and other stakeholders. Consider providing information to the media at regular intervals (e.g., every six hours, to accommodate print and broadcast deadlines — focus on safety and offer visuals (infographics, photos, B-roll). Have experts available for interviews and try to provide media training ahead of time.

Here is a sample email and tweets from ElectriCities of North Carolina:

TO: ElectriCities Board of Directors, NC Mayors, NC City Managers, NC Utility Directors, NCEMPA/NCMPA1 Board of Commissioners, ElectriCities Employees

NC Public Power communities currently have 125,000 outages in eastern North Carolina, concentrated in Rocky Mount, New Bern, Greenville and Tarboro. The Emergency Assistance Program was activated at the outset of the storm and crews have been dispatched from western NC, South Carolina and Alabama to assist in the restoration. Many of these crews traveled yesterday and are already on the ground.

Some of these outages are due to transmission line damage. NCEMPA Operations staff has been in contact with both Progress Energy and Dominion regarding the transmission outages and the companies are working to repair any damage.

Updated outage numbers are reported throughout the day on the Electri-Cities and NC Public Power websites. For the most up-to-date information, please follow ElectriCities of NC on Twitter, our profile can be accessed through this link: [Twitter](#). Many of your communities are also posting real-time information through Twitter.



2. Depending on the severity of the storm and **availability of resources, consider holding a press conference**. This can take place at your utility's operations center or headquarters or even out in the field as restoration efforts begin. If possible, and safety considerations allow, invite television crews to film restoration efforts.
3. **Keep state personnel** — including the governor's office and emergency management contacts — **updated on restoration efforts**.
4. Reach out to media and **share positive stories and numbers that highlight your utility's response to the storm**. This may include speedy restoration or human-interest stories about helping customers.
5. As restoration is winding down or complete, be sure to **send out public thank-you notes** to your utility staff, those who offered mutual aid assistance, and any other parties who played a part in managing the storm. Social media can be effective here, but you may want to consider a newspaper ad or a special event.

Storms are inevitable, and can easily give utilities a public relations black eye when not handled right. But when handled correctly, storms present an opportunity for utilities to foster goodwill in the community by positioning themselves as resilient and responsive. Strong public communications has a lot to do with how utilities fare in an emergency. Communicating honestly and regularly with stakeholders in a way that they can understand goes a long way toward protecting the utility's reputation.



Ensuring Unity of Messaging:

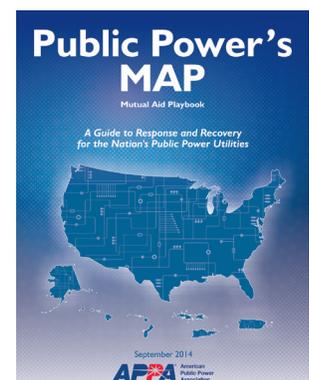
State/Federal

When circulating your press releases or other messaging before, during, or after the storm, it's important to keep your board members, policymakers, media, state and federal agencies, and APPA staff on your distribution list. While this may seem like a daunting task, there are resources to help you on the state/regional level and APPA staff can help cascade information to federal agencies.

Cascading Information to State Agencies

To help you manage this process, APPA's Mutual Aid Working Group recently developed the Public Power Mutual Aid Playbook (MAP), which can be found at publicpower.org/MutualAid. The MAP ensures a coordinated response with state and federal government officials and lists roles and responsibilities of utilities, network coordinators, and national coordinators.

Network coordinators are your liaisons to state and regional counterparts (e.g., state emergency response offices). You can find out who your region's network coordinator is by downloading the Public Power MAP Network Coordinators list from publicpower.org/MutualAid.



Cascading Information to Federal Agencies

Through the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC), APPA staff can cascade information to federal agencies. This is only necessary when the storm affects an entire state, region, or multiple regions (e.g., Superstorm Sandy).

The ESCC is the industry side of the electric sector's partnership with the federal government to advance collective action toward national critical infrastructure security and resilience. It is the strategic communication and coordination mechanism that allows electric sector asset owners and operators and their trade associations to work with the federal government to collectively identify priorities, articulate clear goals, mitigate risk, measure progress, and adapt based on feedback and the changing environment. APPA President & CEO Sue Kelly and four public power utility CEOs serve on the ESCC.

The ESCC's federal government counterparts include senior Administration officials from the White House, relevant Cabinet agencies, federal law enforcement, and national security organizations.

During a large-scale storm, APPA staff and the public power CEOs will cascade response information such as estimated restoration time to the federal government counterparts on a daily basis.

6



Additional Messaging Tips

The national Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) — an industry-government partnership to advance collective action toward national critical infrastructure security and resilience — of which APPA is a member, has published a playbook with a crisis management framework. Some key messages from the playbook are shared below with permission from the ESCC.

Utility Messaging Overview

Pre-event

- 2–5 days in advance: Utilities in the forecasted path are monitoring and preparing
- 24 hours in advance: Utilities are urging customers to prepare

Sample Messages on Utility Preparation

Pre-event

- [UTILITY NAME] in the forecasted path are closely monitoring [HURRICANE NAME]. Extreme winds, heavy rain, and flooding could cause extended power outages.
- [UTILITY NAME] are taking steps now to prepare and encourage their customers to prepare as well.
- [UTILITY NAME] crews will be deployed depending on the location of the greatest damage.

- Our crews are preparing to work extended hours, and have alerted additional staff to provide support services, including customer service staff.
- We are in close contact with federal, state, and local emergency management agencies to ensure a coordinated response.
- Depending on the severity of the storm, damage to the electric grid infrastructure could be extensive and power restoration could take several days.
- After severe weather, assessing damage and estimating when customers will be restored could take up to 24 hours after the heart of the storm has moved from the area.
- Crews are deployed to restore service only when weather conditions become safe.
- Crews are restricted from working on overhead power lines during adverse weather conditions such as thunderstorms in the immediate vicinity, snowstorms, ice storms, and sustained high winds of 35 mph (30 mph if the work involves installing or replacing materials).

Sample Messages on Customer Preparation

Customers Urged to Prepare and Be Safe

- We are urging customers to prepare for potential power outages and act to ensure their safety.

Preparation Tips

- Have adequate prescription medicines and infant supplies on hand.
- If you or someone you know uses life-support equipment that requires electricity to operate, identify a location with emergency power capabilities and make plans to go there or to a hospital during a prolonged outage.
- Assemble an emergency storm kit. Include a battery-powered radio or television, flashlight, a first-aid kit, battery-powered or windup clock, extra batteries, special needs items, an insulated cooler, and a list of important and emergency phone numbers.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of non-perishable foods and bottled water, and have a hand-operated can opener available.

- Have a telephone with a cord or a charged cell phone to use as a backup. Cordless telephones require electricity to operate and won't work if there is an outage.
- Protect your electronic equipment. Unplug sensitive electronics, or plug computers and other sensitive equipment into surge suppressors. Consider an uninterruptible power supply for temporary battery backup power.
- Turn off power to flood-prone basement appliances if it is safe to do so. However, if you have an electric sump pump, you should not turn off the power in your basement.

Safety Tips

- Stay away from downed wires. Please contact [UTILITY CONTACT INFO] to report a downed wire or an outage.
- Avoid crews working in the street. This will keep you and the crews safe, and allow them to work on restoring your power.
- Tune in to local news broadcasts for the latest weather and emergency information.
- Follow the advice of your local emergency management officials.
- Take cover if necessary.

During event

- Utilities are communicating:
- Crews are ready and will work around the clock until all customers are restored.
- Provide details of restoration challenges.
- Provide restoration progress updates and estimated times of restoration.

Sample Messages During Event

- We have launched our response plans in the wake of [HURRICANE NAME] to restore power as quickly as possible to customers.

- At this time, we are dispatching personnel to assess storm damage across the system, which will allow them to strategically target power restoration efforts. These crews include personnel and trucks from utilities across the region and neighboring states.
- A preliminary damage assessment process must be completed before a utility will generate an estimated restoration time for its customers.

Safety Tips

- Stay away from downed wires. Please contact [UTILITY CONTACT INFO] to report a downed wire or an outage.
- Avoid crews working in the street. This will keep you and the crews safe, and allow them to work on restoring your power.
- Visit [YOUR WEBSITE URL] for safety tips and follow the advice of your local emergency management officials.
- If you plan to use a portable generator, follow the manufacturer's instructions and use only when necessary. Don't overload it, and turn it off at night while you sleep and when you are away from home.
- To avoid the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, place portable generators outside in a well-ventilated area. Never run a generator inside, not even in your garage. Do not connect the generator directly into your home's main fuse box or circuit panel.
- Protect food and refrigerated medicine with regular ice in an insulated cooler. If you are without power for more than two hours, refrigerated foods should be placed in a cooler. Foods will stay frozen for 36 to 48 hours in a fully loaded freezer if the door remains closed, and a half-full freezer will generally keep frozen food for up to 24 hours.
- Turn off power to flood-prone basement appliances if it is safe to do so. However, if you have an electric sump pump, you should not turn off the power in your basement.
- Tune in to local news broadcasts for the latest weather and emergency information.
- Take cover if necessary.

Customers Asked to Report Power Outages and Down Wires

- Customers' reports are vital to our restoration efforts.
- Customers are asked to report outages and downed wires by contacting us at [YOUR CONTACT INFO]

Post-event

Utilities are providing event information wrap-up and thank you to customers, crews (internal and mutual assistance), employees and any relevant outside agencies and government officials.

Samples of Post Event Messaging

- We have fully restored power to all [#] customers who reported that they lost electrical service in the wake of [HURRICANE NAME].
- The vast majority—almost [#] percent of all customers—had power restored within [#] hours and restoration activities continued full force, around the clock, until every customer affected by [HURRICANE NAME] were restored.
- We implemented our restoration plans [#] days before [HURRICANE NAME] made landfall or swept into the region.
- Thank you to all of the crews that came from near and far to help with restoration efforts
- Although initial outages associated with [HURRICANE NAME] have now been restored, tree limbs weakened by the storm may continue to fall and cause additional outages.
- Restoration crews are patrolling major power lines over the next few days to spot potential problems of this nature.

- If customers experience an outage, please contact [YOUR UTILITY CONTACT INFO], so repair crews can be dispatched quickly to restore service.
- Customers who have been away and return home to find that they are without power need to report their outages as well.

Contact

First and foremost, utilities must coordinate messaging with their local and state emergency responders and elected leaders. APPA staff also stands ready to support coordination of messaging to federal partners. You can simply email mutualaid@publicpower.org.



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