**Report on Collaborative Research for Hurricane Hardening**

Provided by

The Public Utility Research Center

University of Florida

To the

Utility Sponsor Steering Committee

February 2014

**I. Introduction**

The Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) issued Order No. PSC-06-00351-PAA-EI on April 25, 2006 (Order 06-0351) directing each investor-owned electric utility (IOU) to establish a plan that increases collaborative research to further the development of storm resilient electric utility infrastructure and technologies that reduce storm restoration costs and outages to customers. This order directed IOUs to solicit participation from municipal electric utilities and rural electric cooperatives in addition to available educational and research organizations. As a means of accomplishing this task, the IOUs joined with the municipal electric utilities and rural electric cooperatives in the state (collectively referred to as the Project Sponsors) to form a Steering Committee of representatives from each utility and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Florida’s Public Utility Research Center (PURC). This MOU was recently extended by the Research Collaboration Partners through December 31, 2015.

PURC manages the work flow and communications, develops work plans, serves as a subject matter expert, conducts research, facilitates the hiring of experts, coordinates with research vendors, advises the Project Sponsors, and provides reports for Project activities. The collaborative research has focused on undergrounding, vegetation management, hurricane-wind speeds at granular levels, and improved materials for distribution facilities.

This report provides an update on the activities of the Steering Committee since the previous report dated February 2013.

**II. Undergrounding**

The collaborative research on undergrounding has been focused on understanding the existing research on the economics and effects of hardening strategies, including undergrounding, so that informed decisions can be made about undergrounding policies and specific undergrounding projects.

The collaborative has refined the computer model developed by Quanta Technologies and there has been a collective effort to learn more about the function and functionality of the computer code. PURC and the Project Sponsors have worked to fill information gaps for model inputs and significant efforts have been invested in the area of forensics data collection. Since the state has not been affected by any hurricanes since the database software was completed, there is currently no data. Therefore, future efforts to refine the undergrounding model will occur when such data becomes available.

In addition, PURC has worked with doctoral and master’s candidates in the University of Florida Department of Civil and Coastal Engineering to assess some of the inter-relationships between wind speed and other environmental factors on utility equipment damage. PURC has also been contacted by engineering researchers at other universities with an interest in the model, though no additional relationships have been established. In addition to universities, PURC was contacted by researchers at the Argonne National Laboratory who expressed interest in modeling the effects of storm damage. The researchers ultimately chose to develop a deterministic model, but did use many of the factors that the Collaborative have attempted to quantify. Every researcher that contacts PURC cites the model as the only non-proprietary model of its kind.

The research discussed in last year’s report on the relationship between wind speed and rainfall is still under review by the engineering press. Further results of this and related research can likely be used to further refine the model.

**III. Wind Data Collection**

The Project Sponsors entered into a wind monitoring agreement with WeatherFlow, Inc., in 2007. Under the agreement, Florida Sponsors agreed to provide WeatherFlow with access to their properties and to allow WeatherFlow to install, maintain and operate portions of their wind monitoring network facilities on utility-owned properties under certain conditions in exchange for access to wind monitoring data generated by WeatherFlow's wind monitoring network in Florida. WeatherFlow’s Florida wind monitoring network includes 50 permanent wind monitoring stations around the coast of Florida, including one or more stations located on utility-owned property. The wind monitoring agreement expired in early 2012; however, the wind, temperature, and barometric pressure data being collected at these stations is being made available to the Project Sponsors on a complimentary basis.

**IV**. **Public Outreach**

In last year’s report we discussed the impact of Hurricane Sandy on greater interest in storm preparedness. PURC researchers discussed the collaborative effort in Florida with the engineering departments of the state regulators in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and New Jersey. While all of the regulators and policymakers showed great interest in the genesis of the collaborative effort, and the results of that effort, they have not, at this point, shown further interest in participating in the research effort.

On April 15, 2013, the *Wall Street Journal* published a special section entitled ‘Big Issues: Energy’ which featured authors promulgating the “Yes” or “No” position to various questions surrounding the energy industry. One of those questions was “Should Utilities Be Required to Bury Power Lines to Protect Them?”, and the editors of the *Journal* asked PURC Director of Energy Studies Ted Kury to contribute the “No” position. In October, Kury and Dr. Roger Anderson of Columbia University (who had provided the “Yes” position), revisited their print debate as the keynote session of the 2013 EEI/NRECA Utility Siting Workshop in Richmond, Virginia.

**V. Conclusion**

In response to the FPSC’s Order 06-0351, IOUs, municipal electric utilities, and rural electric cooperatives joined together and retained PURC to coordinate research on electric infrastructure hardening. The steering committee has taken steps to extend the research collaboration MOU so that the industry will be in a position to focus its research efforts on undergrounding research, granular wind research and vegetation management when significant storm activity affects the state.



