



Mutual Aid Lessons Learned

4/14/2020

- **Impact**
 - The tornado resulted in a loss of power to several critical facilities, to industrial customers, to commercial customers, and to residential customers. In total, we estimate that 10-15% of our customers lost power (CWL has 38,196 electric meters).
 - Roughly 70 poles were broken with many spans of downed wire. Most of the damage was to the 3-phase distribution system, although a short reach of transmission line (4 poles) was downed.
- **Mutual Aid**
 - Jonesboro brought in a total of 60 additional workers and 34 pieces of additional equipment from 4 other municipal utilities and 2 contractors: Paragould Light Water and Cable (Paragould, AR), Conway Corporation (Conway, AR), North Little Rock Electric Department (North Little Rock, AR), West Memphis Utilities (West Memphis, AR), Grays Power Supply (contractor), and KCI (contractor).
- **Restoration**
 - The tornado hit Jonesboro at roughly 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 28th. Crews worked Saturday evening clearing debris, securing substations, and restoring power to critical facilities and densely populated areas. Power was restored to roughly half of affected customers by late Saturday evening.
 - Major 3-phase line construction began Sunday morning. Over Sunday, March 29th and Monday, March 30th, roughly 5 miles of high voltage distribution line was restored and energized along some very challenging routes considering the storm debris, limited access and heavy traffic. By the end of Monday, power had been restored to all customers who were ready to receive it except for roughly 10 businesses and 50-75 residences.
 - Work on 3-phase restoration continued Tuesday, March 31st. By the end of the Tuesday, all power had been restored to customers who were ready to receive it.
- **Safety**
 - On PPE utilized gloves, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes frequently. Crews were instructed to wipe down their equipment at the beginning of their shift, at times when there was a change in equipment operator, at periodic intervals throughout the day, and at the end of their shift.
 - In an effort to avoid congregation of large groups, food was packaged in individual meal containers (rather than buffet or family style) and was delivered to crews in the field. Sanitizing wipes were placed at meal drop off points and workers were encouraged to maintain social distancing when getting their food and while eating.
- **Materials**
 - Materials from the stock yard were delivered to the mutual aid jobsites by CWL employees. The stock yard is arranged in such a manner that CWL's employees could practice social distancing while gathering materials. Access to the warehouse was managed so that social distancing could be practiced there as well.
- **General Work Practices**
 - Social distancing was emphasized to all crews throughout the response. Additionally, care was taken to place workers from the same responding utility in different work crews to mitigate the risk of virus spread among members of the same utility. Finally, all workers were instructed to notify their foreman/crew leader of any signs/symptoms of personal illness so that they could be removed from the work environment and given appropriate medical attention. We did not receive any reports of illness throughout the time of the mutual aid response.
- **Changes to response for mutual aid due to COVID-19**

- No utilities were unwilling to help us due to COVID-19. However, some utilities were limited in the number of workers they could send us due to the strain COVID-19 has put on their business continuity plans.
- Lessons Learned as it pertains to mutual aid during COVID-19
 - What went well
 1. We were humbled by the response we received from our sister utilities and our contract forces. Additionally, our customers were very understanding, and our community was very supportive. We were very pleased to have power restored to all customers who were ready to receive it in just 3.5 days.
 2. The overwhelming response to this event while dealing with the COVID-19 situation, reaffirmed our appreciation of the utility workers' servant spirit and sacrificial commitment to the customer and the mission. The crews were fighting two battles, one that could be seen and one that could not be seen. They rose to the occasion, as always, and figured out how to work in a protective pragmatic manner to restore critical utility service. An event of this magnitude took an entire community to deal with. Those impacted, the first responders (emergency management offices, law enforcement, fire departments, other utilities, etc.) and the volunteers all pulled together to get the community back to some form of normalcy.
 - What would CWL do differently
 1. In terms of controllable variables, we can't think of anything that should have been done differently. CWL had previously donated its supply of N95 masks to the frontline local healthcare workers. Even considering the storm, donating the masks/PPE to the healthcare workers was the right thing to do. The utility restored power as quickly as possible and returned to its work from home routine as possible.