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Hurricane Florence: Electric Power Industry Is Coordinating Response Efforts With Federal, State, and Local Government Officials

WASHINGTON (September 14, 2018) – Hurricane Florence made landfall this morning near Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. As of 6:00 p.m. on September 14, approximately 833,000 customers are without power, with the majority of outages in North Carolina. Florence remains a dangerous storm with high winds, heavy rain, storm surge, and inland flooding.

Investor-owned electric companies, public power utilities, and electric cooperatives in the path of Hurricane Florence pre-positioned equipment, resources, and more than 40,000 workers from across the country and Canada in strategic locations in advance of the storm to prepare for anticipated power outages and to minimize the time needed to begin damage assessment and recovery efforts. Crews are responding to power outages and doing what they can, where they can, and when they can, provided it is safe to do so.

Power restoration is a team effort, and strong industry-government coordination and cross-sector collaboration are essential. The CEO-led Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and FEMA are closely coordinating to support the ongoing preparation and staging activities, and the movement of mutual assistance crews.

"This is a long-duration event, and we appreciate the ongoing leadership from DOE, DHS, and FEMA in helping to coordinate the industry's response with federal, state, and local officials," said ESCC Co-chair, Duane Highley, president and CEO of Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation.

The first step in any restoration is damage assessment—in some cases, crews may not be able to gain access to the most heavily damaged and flooded areas until the storm clears and it is deemed safe for them to enter. Crews will not be able to use certain equipment, including bucket trucks, until high winds subside. In flooded areas, search and rescue and life safety will be the top priorities.

"We know that being without power causes hardships, and electric companies ask customers for their patience ahead of what will be a lengthy period of power restoration and recovery from this major storm," said ESCC Co-chair Kevin Wailes, CEO of Lincoln, Nebraska-based Lincoln Electric System. "Safety is the electric power industry's number one priority, and we are focused on the safety of our customers, communities, and crews during the complex restoration process."

It is critical that customers allow the first responders to do their jobs. Stay off roads, beaches, and waterways, and avoid returning home until state emergency officials have indicated it is safe to do so. Having roadways clogged with traffic will only impede the search and rescue and restoration efforts.

"More than 40,000 workers are willingly in one of the most dangerous places in America today," said ESCC Co-chair Tom Fanning, chairman, president, and CEO of Atlanta-based Southern Company. "These men and women who left their families behind are heroes in the restoration effort, and our thoughts and prayers are with them, the first responders, and all the people being impacted by this storm."

About the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council

The ESCC serves as the principal liaison between leadership in the federal government and in the electric power sector, with the mission of coordinating efforts to prepare for national-level incidents or threats to critical infrastructure. Protecting the energy grid from threats that could impact national security and public safety is a responsibility shared by both the government and the electric power sector. The ESCC facilitates and supports policy- and public affairs-related activities and initiatives designed to enhance the reliability and resilience of the energy grid. These activities include all hazards, steady-state preparation, and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery for the nation's electricity sector.

More information is available at: <http://www.electricitysubsector.org/>
