



Electricity Subsector  
Coordinating Council

## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Hurricane Laura: Power Restored to Three Quarters of Customers As Industry Works to Rebuild the Most Severely Damaged Infrastructure**

**WASHINGTON (September 2, 2020)** – Less than a week after Hurricane Laura’s destructive winds ripped across Louisiana and parts of Texas, Mississippi, and Arkansas, electricity has been restored to approximately 737,000—or 75 percent of—customers impacted by this historic and devastating storm. Before Laura made landfall, investor-owned electric companies, public power utilities, and electric cooperatives in the storm’s path mobilized an army of at least 29,000 workers from 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada to respond and to restore power as quickly as possible once it was safe to do so. This workforce includes company personnel, contractors, and mutual assistance workers.

Approximately 251,000 electricity customers remain without power as of 4:00 p.m. EDT, with most of these outages in communities in Louisiana that suffered a direct blow from the hurricane. In these areas, the storm caused catastrophic and unprecedented damage to the high-voltage transmission system, and entire sections of the energy grid must be rebuilt before power can be restored. While the distribution lines that carry power to individual homes and businesses already may have been repaired, some customers will be unable to have their power restored until the transmission lines serving their communities are rebuilt and reenergized. There also will be customers who cannot be reconnected at all due to the severe damage to their homes and businesses.

“Laura was a devastating storm, and we appreciate the coordinated response to this restoration mission that is taking place across the industry and government,” said Joy Ditto, President and CEO of the American Public Power Association (APPA). “Tens of thousands of workers were mobilized quickly and are making progress in restoring power in the face of extensive damage and challenging geographic locations, as well as ensuring appropriate pandemic response measures are taken. Workers continue to be redeployed to the hardest-hit areas where, in many cases, both the distribution and transmission infrastructure must be completely rebuilt before power can be restored.”

The CEO-led Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) is highly engaged and continues to convene calls to discuss the restoration efforts with senior officials from the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and with executives from all segments of the electric power industry.

“Power restoration is a team effort, and strong industry-government coordination and cross-sector collaboration are essential,” said DOE Deputy Secretary Mark Menezes. “The transmission loss in Louisiana is significant, with more than 1,000 transmission structures damaged or destroyed by the storm. Rebuilding the transmission system is essential to the overall restoration effort and will take weeks given the massive scale and complexity of the work. We will continue to coordinate closely to ensure the full capabilities of the industry and government are marshalled to rebuild this critical infrastructure as quickly as possible.”

The ESCC also is coordinating closely with the industrial customers impacted by the storm and with its manufacturing partners and supplier networks to ensure that all material needs are being met.

“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 Tom Kuhn, President of the Edison Electric Institute (EEI). “Hurricane Laura caused heartbreaking, utter devastation to communities in Louisiana and Texas and catastrophic damage to the transmission system on a magnitude we rarely have seen as an industry. The transmission system is the backbone of the energy grid, and rebuilding it safely takes time. Crews will continue to work around-the-clock in their mission to restore power and hope to the customers and communities we are so privileged to serve.”

“The herculean effort required to recover from Hurricane Laura will be a marathon, not a sprint,” said Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). “In partnership with transmission system owners, the combined electric sector workforce is working determinedly to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. That will require creativity, communication and a continued focus on our crews’ health and wellness in the coming weeks amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.”

Safety is always the top priority in any restoration effort. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, crews are following additional protocols designed to keep them safe and healthy. These protocols add an additional layer of complexity to the restoration process. Customers are urged not to approach crews and to remember the importance of social distancing so these mission-essential workers can continue to work safely.

Customers also are urged never to use a generator inside a home, garage, crawl space, or anywhere exhaust fumes can get into enclosed spaces. Customers should plug appliances directly into the generator and not connect them to their homes’ circuits to prevent additional damage to the energy grid. Finally, customers are reminded to stay away from downed or sagging power lines and to assume that all fallen wires and anything touching them are energized.

### **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, and respond to, 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/>