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Public Service Commission
Ice Storm Outages Top 607,000
Customers - Total exceeds Hurricane
Ike; storm now worst on record

Press Release Thursday, January

Date: 29, 2009

Contact Andrew

Information: Melnykovich
502-564-3940, ext.
208
502-330-5981
(cell)

More than 607,000 Kentucky
electric customers are now without
power as a result of this week's massive

■ Service connection damage ■

The PSC is urging residents
affected by the ice storm to
check electric connections
and meters for damage.
Damaged connections or
meters must be repaired
before power can be
restored to a home or
business.

Falling or sagging
power lines may have
damaged the connections
between the utility
company's overhead line
and a customer's electric
system. The connections
are usually in the form of a

ice storm, the Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) says.

The storm has now caused the largest power outage on record in Kentucky, exceeding the 600,000 customers who lost power on Sept. 14, 2008, as a result of Hurricane Ike.

As of noon Thursday, utilities under the PSC's jurisdiction had reported that about 607,152 customers were without power. That figure does not include rural electric cooperatives within the Tennessee Valley Authority system or any municipal utilities.

The outages extend across the entire state, ranging from Ballard County in the west to Boyd County in the east. Telephone, cellular phone, cable and internet service also has been disrupted over much of the state.

Even as restoration efforts get underway, the number of customers without power has continued to climb. Falling trees and tree limbs continue to bring down power lines faster than crews can complete repairs.

Utilities are telling the PSC that outages will extend into next week and beyond. Repair crews from other states have begun arriving in Kentucky to assist with the restoration efforts.

"Because of the severe winter weather conditions, this will be a much more difficult and dangerous restoration task than what we faced following Hurricane Ike," Governor Steve Beshear said. "That storm did all its damage in 12 hours and was followed by more than a week of ideal weather."

Governor Beshear added that conditions also are much more difficult for those Kentucky residents who have lost their electric service.

masthead – a conduit connected to the service line – or, in older homes, an eyebolt which holds the line in place and an insulated line leading to the meter. In some cases, the meter or meter base may also be damaged.

Once power is restored, damaged connections or meters could pose an electrical or fire hazard if not repaired or if repaired improperly.

"It is critical that damaged connections be repaired by a qualified professional and inspected before power is restored," PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. "In past outages, fires and severe damage have been caused by damaged or improperly repaired service connections."

Repairing a service connection or meter base is the responsibility of the individual customer.

The meter base is the square or rectangular box on which the meter itself is mounted. It belongs to the property owner. The meter itself – the circular, glass-enclosed portion that attaches to the meter base – is the property of the utility company.

Customers with damaged connections or

“These conditions are particularly dangerous for residents who normally use electric heat,” he said. “People in homes without heat should find shelter elsewhere if possible. But those who choose to stay in their homes should be very careful when using portable heaters or portable generators.”

PSC Chairman David Armstrong asked Kentuckians to remain patient.

“We understand the frustration that accompanies the loss of a vital service, especially for the second time in less than five months for so many people,” he said. “The utility companies are working hard to restore service as quickly as possible.”

Armstrong stressed that residents should not attempt to remove branches or trees that have fallen across utility lines and those without power should check their service connections and report any damage to their electric company.

“In these kinds of situations, the safety of utility workers and the public should be everyone’s primary concern,” he said.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.

meters should take the following steps:

- Notify the utility company that the service connection, meter base and/or meter is damaged. The utility can then make sure that the line is not energized until repairs are completed.
- In the event that only the meter itself is damaged, contact the utility to have it repaired or replaced and your service restored.
- Contact an electrician to repair the meter base or service connection. The repair work can be done prior to power being restored in an area, thus eliminating any additional delays.
- The electrician will obtain the proper meter base from the utility. Some utilities impose no charge for the meter base, but the customer will bear the installation cost.
- Have the repairs inspected by a state-certified inspector working for your local government. The electrician should be able to help arrange the inspection.
- Notify the utility when the repairs are complete and have been approved. A utility technician will install a new meter and restore the power.
- Keep all repair records

and contact your property insurer.

Using portable generators safely

The PSC also reminds customers using a generator for temporary electrical power to do so in a manner that insures the their safety and the safety of those working to restore power. Keys to safe operation of generators include:

- To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, generators should only be operated outside in well-ventilated areas. Do not operate generators in your garage.

- Make sure a generator is properly sized for the load you will place on it.

Remember that starting an electric motor, such a refrigerator compressor, requires more electricity than the amount needed to keep it running. **DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUR GENERATOR.**

- Use only three-prong, grounded extension cords, properly rated for the load, to connect appliances to generators.

- **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FEED POWER INTO YOUR HOME BY ADAPTING AN EXTENSION CORD TO CONNECT A**

GENERATOR TO A WALL OUTLET. THIS CAN CAUSE A FIRE.

- DO NOT CONNECT A GENERATOR TO INSIDE WIRING IN ANY WAY UNLESS YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IS EQUIPPED WITH A TRANSFER SWITCH THAT PREVENTS POWER FROM FLOWING BACK INTO (BACKFEEDING) THE WIRES THAT SUPPLY YOUR ELECTRICITY.

Backfeeding poses a severe danger to workers attempting to restore electrical service. They can be severely injured or killed by power flowing back into lines which they assume are not carrying electricity. Also, if the line to your home or business becomes grounded, backfeeding can permanently damage your generator.

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