

PPL Crews Leave on Puerto Rico Power Restoration Mission

Line workers eager to help people who have been in the dark for months



PPL Journeyman Lineman Jason Roberts of Lackawanna County shares a moment with his family before leaving for a month of power restoration work in Puerto Rico.

ALLENTOWN, Pa., Jan. 25, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- PPL Electric Utilities employees packed their hard hats and work boots and boarded a flight to Puerto Rico Thursday, the first leg of their month-long journey to help restore power on the hurricane-battered island.

The line workers and support personnel from throughout the PPL service territory will join a small army of utility workers from other companies around the country. Their goal: To help turn the lights back on for an estimated 1.2 million people who have been without power since September.

The employees, all volunteers, have signed on for 30 days. Afterward, they will rotate home and, if needed, will be replaced by another group.

"This is a massive power restoration effort all converging on the island," said field manager Chris Gonzalez, 42, of Stroudsburg, who will lead the PPL team. "We're eager to do our part to help the people who have suffered for so long."

PPL team leader Chris Gonzalez

Gonzalez, who has family roots in Puerto Rico, noted that many of those on the PPL team are leaving their families behind for an extended trip to work under very difficult conditions in the island's mountains. He said the group is up for the challenge.

"This is what line workers do," he said. "It's what makes us tick. We know it's difficult to be without power, and that people are depending on us to help fix that."

Twenty-five PPL line trucks and other vehicles were shipped to Puerto Rico from two ports – Norfolk, Va., and Lake Charles, La. PPL planners and logistics specialists have worked for the past month -- including straight through the December holiday period – to accomplish the move and arrange all the details needed to transfer

37 people and tons of equipment to a place not accessible by land. (Thirty-two people flew to Puerto Rico Thursday. Five others went there a few days earlier to scout the damage and plan the work.)

A PPL bucket truck is unloaded at the port of Ponce, Puerto Rico.

PPL is one of 18 electric utilities from around the nation sending crews in an effort being coordinated by the Edison Electric Institute, an industry trade group.

Sending repair crews to hard-hit areas in other parts of the country is a normal part of utility mutual aid, which also benefits PPL customers after damaging storms here at home. There are plenty of line repair personnel staying behind to handle any outages in PPL's territory.

"The credit really goes to this team of people who are willing to drop everything and be away from their families for a month straight," said Gonzalez. "People in Puerto Rico need us, and we're going to be there for them."

PPL Electric Utilities provides electric delivery service to more than 1.4 million homes and businesses in Pennsylvania and ranks among the best utility companies in the country for customer service and reliability. PPL Electric Utilities is a major employer in the communities it serves. It is a subsidiary of PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL). For more information visit www.pplelectric.com.

Editor's Note: PPL has video footage available of a bucket truck being unloaded at the port in Ponce, Puerto Rico. It also includes aerial video, shot from a drone, showing a barge full of utility vehicles being unloaded, and also showing wider views of the port and water.

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