

Calmer Winter Keeps Utility Maintenance on Track

PPL Electric Utilities Completes Infrared Scans of its Local Power Lines

PPL Electric Utilities

When the weather remains calm and outages are less common, we don't think too much about what local utility personnel do.

With few winter storms and generally calmer weather in recent months, [PPL Electric Utilities](#) said it completed infrared thermal inspections of its area overhead distribution lines for 2012. As part of its overall system maintenance program, the company's line maintenance inspectors patrol thousands of miles of distribution lines that run along roadways across its system with specially mounted cameras on the vehicles.

With 33,000 miles of overhead distribution lines, PPL Electric Utilities scans portions of its primary distribution system each year, mainly during the winter months, in an effort to identify needed maintenance that will prevent future outages and improve service reliability.

Locally, infrared inspections were completed in recent weeks along about 600 miles of overhead power lines in Columbia, Clinton, Lycoming, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties. Specifically, inspections were done in the following communities and municipalities: Allenwood, Berwick, Beavertown, Bloomsburg, West Bloomsburg, Derry, Flemington, Hepburn, Hamilton, Jersey Shore, Kelly, Kenmar, Larry's Creek, Lock Haven, Middleburg, Millville, Muncy, Salem, Scott, Selinsgrove, Williamsport, South Williamsport, South Milton and Watson.

"We have a number of inspection and maintenance programs that are completed each year that are essential to keeping the lights on and trying to prevent outages before they occur. The weather has been cooperative so far this year, and our engineers and field personnel will keep working throughout the year to provide quality service for our area customers," said Frank Gaida, regional operations director.

The overhead lines are scanned from an infrared camera mounted on a vehicle roof. The camera captures a thermal image of the utility's electrical components, such as power lines, insulators, fuses, switches, lightning arrestors and transformers. This method detects potential problems whether or not there are visible defects.

The program is completed during the winter months because the scanner is more effective identifying potential equipment problems in the colder temperatures. Any identified equipment problems then are scheduled for repair or replacement, which becomes the basis for the utility's ongoing maintenance work through the spring and the rest of the year.

In addition to the infrared inspections, PPL Electric Utilities will conduct visual inspections of equipment at 46 local substations and along more than 600 miles of distribution facilities. The company's line inspectors and line crews will look for visible defects in equipment like poles, crossarms and other electrical components. With nearly 900,000 utility poles on its distribution system, the utility manages a program to visually inspect all poles at least once every 10 years.

These inspection programs are just examples of the maintenance conducted each year on the electric delivery system. PPL Electric Utilities also will spend \$25 million in circuit patrols and tree clearing along distribution lines this year to reduce tree-related power outages. The company plans work along 1,135 miles of power lines in its six-county northcentral Pennsylvania region.

PPL Electric Utilities, a subsidiary of PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL), provides electric delivery services to about 1.4 million customers in Pennsylvania and has consistently ranked among the best companies for customer service in the United States. More information is available at www.pplelectric.com.

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