

# One Year After Irene, PPL Electric Utilities Better Prepared for Major Storms

## Customer Communications, Storm Staffing Among Areas of Improvement

One year after Hurricane Irene caused devastating damage throughout the mid-Atlantic, [PPL Electric Utilities](#) has made many operational changes to be better prepared for major storms and strengthen its response for customers.

Among the changes are upgraded call center operations, expanded staffing for storm response, improved procedures for coordinating storm response, better communications with customers and public officials, as well as increased use of automated devices on the distribution system and significantly greater funding for clearing trees around power lines.

“We take storm response very seriously. Immediately following the hurricane and the snowstorm last year, we identified improvements we needed to make and we’ve followed through on them. We’ve been diligent in working on how we prepare for and respond to major storms to better serve our customers,” said Diane Coffin, the utility’s manager of emergency preparedness.

Hurricane Irene, which affected the region on Aug. 27, 2011, knocked out power to more than 425,000 PPL Electric Utilities customers. It was the utility’s second-worst storm in the past 20 years, in terms of the number of affected customers. It was followed by severe flooding associated with Tropical Storm Lee in some areas and the unusual October snowstorm.

As soon as cleanup from the hurricane ended, the utility began reviewing its performance and identifying ways to improve. The company also met with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and state legislators to hear their perspective on areas most needing review.

## Improving storm response

PPL Electric Utilities has taken steps to improve its storm response, as well as implemented programs that help prevent storm-related damage. Examples include:

- The utility allocated \$45 million for vegetation management along transmission and distribution power lines this year, up \$12 million from last year. This systemwide increase in trimming and clearing work reduces the risk of outages caused by falling tree limbs.
- More damage assessors have been identified and trained for service after major storms – including some retired PPL Electric Utilities employees. That will help the utility more quickly gauge the extent of damage and the resources needed to repair it. More extensive assessments also lay the foundation for providing more accurate and timely estimated restoration times to customers.
- The company also has enhanced the way it deploys outside help, such as contractors and utility personnel from other areas, including Kentucky where two PPL-affiliated utilities operate.
- Company representatives met this spring and summer with county emergency management agencies throughout PPL Electric Utilities’ 29-county service area. The utility reviewed its storm response process and shared ways for more open dialogue and information exchange during emergencies.
- The company updated its database of facilities critical to public safety and reviewed processes with large customers so appropriate response is given to critical public health and safety facilities functions, such as hospitals, 911 call centers, and local water and sewer facilities.

## Improving customer communications

The utility has also made numerous improvements to its customer communications systems and processes. Some major examples:

- The company has expanded the number of available phone lines and increase staffing in its customer call

center for major storm events. Customer calls during Irene and the October snowstorm far exceeded the company's previous call center capacity. Also, the utility improved its interactive phone system to make it easier for customers to report outages and get outage updates. These improvements have been used this year to improve response after thunder and lightning storms.

- Customers now can report outages using cell phones and other mobile devices after the utility introduced a mobile friendly version of its online [Outage Center](http://www.pplelectric.com/outage) ([www.pplelectric.com/outage](http://www.pplelectric.com/outage)). Further enhancements to the Outage Center are planned in 2013.
- Customers can [sign up for MyPPL Alerts](#), a free service that provides updates on outages as well as account information via text message and email. The company continues to expand its use of social media to reach customers about storm preparations and response beyond traditional media.
- Following major storms, daily conference calls will be held to keep state, county and municipal officials and their staffs better informed. Customers often look to those officials, as well as the utility, for information on restoration. The system was tested with an emergency drill this spring.

General information about outage causes, the company's outage restoration priorities and outage response, safety tips and related information are available on the Outage Center section of [www.pplelectric.com](http://www.pplelectric.com). Customers are asked to always report any service interruption by calling PPL Electric Utilities (1-800-342-5775) or using the Outage Center to report the outage and get outage updates.

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](http://www.pplelectric.com).

For further information: Kurt Blumenau, 610-774-5997, PPL Electric Utilities

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