Thankful for help: LG&E and KU offer support to fellow utilities

Company crews, contract partners help restore service during an unprecedented year.
(LOUISVILLE, Ky.) — When Mother Nature packs a punch, leaving downed power lines and damaged equipment in the wake, utilities – including Louisville Gas and Electric Company and Kentucky Utilities Company – are among the first stepping forward to assist communities and fellow utility partners in need.

In a record-setting year, more than 1,200 LG&E and KU employees and resident contractors have responded to support 18 fellow utilities in repairing damage left behind after two ice storms, eight severe thunderstorms and tornadoes, and six hurricanes and tropical storms. These individuals are linemen, vegetation crews, damage assessors and support personnel.

Most recently, more than 150 contract partners returned this month from assisting Alabama Power and Oklahoma Gas and Electric in the aftermath of Hurricane Zeta and an historic ice storm in the Great Plains state. An additional 95 contract partners returned after assisting AEP Ohio and Consumers Energy in Michigan restore service for customers after a significant windstorm swept through their areas.

“In our industry, we know when Mother Nature delivers the worst, it often means we must be at our best to restore power and vital services for these impacted communities,” said Steve Woodworth, director of Distribution System Operations & Planning for LG&E and KU. “This year presented its own challenges as we all pivot to accommodate necessary pandemic guidelines, and we had employees stepping into and excelling at new restoration leadership roles for the first time.”

Communities across the U.S. are still overcoming impacts from devastating natural disasters that caused more than $1 billion in estimated damages, and it’s also one of the busiest Atlantic hurricane seasons on record amid a global pandemic. This year marks the second time the official alphabetical list of hurricane names was exhausted, requiring forecasters to use Greek letter names, as hurricane season along the Atlantic coast officially comes to an end Nov. 30.

Before sending crews, LG&E and KU ensure there are ample resources on hand for everything from routine maintenance to emergency situations. The company takes many factors into consideration — including the weather heading toward our service territories — when allocating resources.

This coordination takes place through the company’s participation in Great Lakes Mutual Assistance, chaired by Woodworth; Midwest Mutual Assistance; and the Southeastern Electric Exchange. The company also participates in mutual assistance through the American Gas and Southern Gas associations. These mutual assistance groups represent a collection of utilities who provide access to invaluable resources and hundreds of crews from more than 20 states when mobilizing for potential large-scale restoration efforts.

In turn, many of these same utilities have offered mutual assistance support to the company when restoring customers’ power following historic storms and weather events that impacted our LG&E and KU service territories.

“We’re thankful to be in an industry where so many partners are willing to lend a

hand," said Woodworth. "This year was no exception, and we know many of these partners would be there if we needed them like in 2018."

This year's support posed additional challenges to ensure crews could follow pandemic guidelines and take additional safety precautions. Crews left equipped with necessary safety equipment including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and thermometers. Host utilities provided any additional protective equipment that might be needed. Additional adjustments accommodated COVID-19 precautions: smaller staging sites limited interaction between other, non-LG&E and KU crews; crews worked separately from other utilities; and box lunches replaced buffet-style meals.

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Louisville Gas and Electric Company and Kentucky Utilities Company, part of the PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL) family of companies, are regulated utilities that serve more than 1.3 million customers and have consistently ranked among the best companies for customer service in the United States. LG&E serves 329,000 natural gas and 418,000 electric customers in Louisville and 16 surrounding counties. KU serves 558,000 customers in 77 Kentucky counties and five counties in Virginia. More information is available at www.lge-ku.com and www.pplweb.com.

For further information: For more information, call the LG&E and KU media hotline at 502–627–4999.

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