

PPL Electric Utilities' Customers to Benefit from More Phone Lines, Other Upgrades for Major Storms

PPL Electric Utilities

[PPL Electric Utilities](#) is delivering on its promise to improve customer phone access during major storm emergencies and provide more accurate restoration times.

The improvements, outlined in a plan recently submitted to the state Public Utility Commission, call for:

- Increasing the number of telephone lines serving the customer contact center by 20 percent.
- Expanding the number of customer service representatives available for emergency calls.
- Leasing capacity with an outside service that can assist with high-volume call periods.
- Improving the telephone interactive voice response and outage management systems to ensure customer outage information can be managed more effectively. Enabling customers to report an outage without multiple attempts will dramatically reduce repeated attempts to reach the company and further reduce peak call volume.
- Refining the process for estimating restoration times for outages so those estimates are more accurate and timely, particularly with larger storms.
- Offering easier ways to report outages via the [web](#) and smartphones.
- Increasing communications with customers to provide more proactive status updates to customers, which includes greater use of online social media, particularly [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

The multimillion dollar improvement plan is vitally important to alleviate system constraints for emergency periods when customer calls spike. Some items already have been implemented, others are under way and can be completed before the end of the year, and others will take additional time, said David G. DeCampli, president of PPL Electric Utilities.

"We want and need to hear from our customers as much as they want to reach us when such severely damaging storms move through our service area," said DeCampli. "It was clear from the impact from Hurricane Irene and the late October snowstorm that we had to improve our performance to better serve our customers. We are accountable to our customers and regulators to perform well even under the most difficult circumstances."

Unprecedented Call Volume

During the hurricane and snowstorm, customer call volume exceeded 100,000 during a peak hour and 1.2 million total calls for each event. The call volume associated with these two events exceeded the company's total call volume for the entire year of 2010.

The company is working with two leading communications firms to significantly increase call center capacity and avoid busy signals and reduce wait times.

"These changes are not the end. We're reviewing customer service best practices in our industry and with other service companies to identify other potential improvements," DeCampli said.

Historic Storms

Hurricane Irene and the autumn snowstorm now rank as the utility's second and third worst storms in terms of damage to the electric delivery system and customer outages, behind only Hurricane Isabel in 1999.

More than 800,000 customers were affected by outages — more customer interruptions from these two storms than all of the storms over the past three years. Other than 2003, the company's service area in central and eastern Pennsylvania has endured more major storms this year than any year since 1991. (A major storm is

considered one that affects service to more than 10 percent of the company's customers.)

Recent Customer Service Improvements

Over the past five years, the company has made several improvements to enhance customer service, including:

- A new outage management system in 2007 with subsequent software upgrades this year.
- More than doubling its telephone IVR capacity in 2008 with further system upgrades in 2009 and 2011.
- Expanded online self-service capabilities on the web's Outage Center in 2010.
- Running a test pilot of a multichannel customer communications platform, referred to as MyPPL alerts, to send notifications to customers via their choice of email, text message or telephone call.

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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