




# Texas Electric Cooperatives

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

## Communications

2550 S. IH-35

Austin, TX 78704

Telephone: (512) 454-0311 Fax: (512) 486-6254

[www.texas-ec.org](http://www.texas-ec.org)

## NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT: Carol Moczygemba, Executive Editor, Texas Electric Cooperatives (512) 486-6243;  
[cmoczygemba@texas-ec.org](mailto:cmoczygemba@texas-ec.org)**

### **ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES PREPARE FOR LENGTHY POWER RESTORATION EFFORTS IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE IKE**

Here's the scene that electric cooperative crews will find in the wake of Hurricane Ike: Utility poles snapped in half. Downed trees and power lines. Roads blocked by debris. Flooded areas.

The damage inflicted by Ike most certainly will leave thousands of people in the dark, and electric cooperative officials remind the public that it will take time—weeks in some cases—to turn the lights back on.

The punishment meted out by Ike will be obvious. But in the coming days, what won't be so obvious is the behind-the-scenes work being done by cooperative crews as they fight their way through the destruction and debris, rebuilding electrical systems one pole at a time.

Everyone at your electric co-op—from the support staff in the office taking your outage calls to line crews out in the field—is working day and night to restore power and will continue to work until your lights are back on. Crews from neighboring co-ops will lend a hand as well.

Clearly, restoring power isn't as easy as flipping a switch. From setting poles to stringing wire, there's a tremendous amount of work to be done. Co-op crews must deal with saturated ground, which makes setting poles difficult. Bucket trucks must weave their way around downed tree limbs blocking roads and rights-of-way. Crew workers—sometimes climbing into harm's way—must untangle fallen trees and power lines. Chain saws roar as crews cut through limbs and other debris.

Keith Stapleton, chief communications officer for Sam Houston Electric Cooperative in Livingston, has firsthand experience in the kind of destruction a hurricane can wreak. He was part of the nearly month long effort to restore power to Sam Houston members after Hurricane Rita devastated the co-op's system in 2005. Stapleton explained how power restoration after a widespread event like a hurricane works.

“As soon as it safe for our crews to be in the field, the process of assessing the damage and removing trees and debris begins,” he said Friday. “As the rights-of-way are cleared, we begin the massive task of rebuilding the lines. Safety of our members and of those working to restore power is of the utmost importance. It's a huge, well-orchestrated operation, but it does take some time.

“A large storm, such as Ike, can knock out generation facilities, transmission lines and distribution lines,” Stapleton said. “All are essential in delivering electricity to our members. We want our members to know that our emergency operations plan is already in effect, even before the storm makes landfall. Crews are staged in

the area and are ready to begin the restoration process right away, and we will continue working until everyone's power is back on.”

So while you're waiting for the lights to come back on, remember that Sam Houston and all co-ops in Ike's path are taking all the appropriate steps—and as quickly as possible—to restore power. But remember also that such efforts take time considering the widespread damage.

The restoration process begins before the hurricane even hits. Several days before landfall, co-ops begin estimating how many outside crews might be needed—a number that varies as the storm approaches. Co-ops typically use contractors and crews from other cooperatives.

“It's an army of folks out there,” Stapleton said, explaining that incoming workers fill local hotel rooms and even sleep in tents in a camp set up by Sam Houston. “We build a small city to house 500 to 1,000 people over a number of days.”

From there, the post-hurricane work list is extensive, starting with damage assessment, the clearing of trees and debris and the rebuilding and repairing of lines. Specifically, crews might have to use chain saws to remove trees from twisted and mangled lines or cut up a tree to remove it from a roadway.

Crews must clean up scrap wire, broken poles, insulators and transformers. Leaning poles must be fixed, and there is line to resag, meaning it is tightened or loosened, depending on what a particular situation requires.

Generally speaking, transmission towers and lines are checked first as co-ops begin their restoration efforts. Next, substations are checked, followed by main and secondary distribution lines, or feeders, if the problem can't be isolated at the substation. Next to be addressed are the final supply lines, or tap lines, that carry power to the utility poles or underground transformers outside structures.

Call your co-op if damage occurs on the service line between your house and the transformer on a nearby pole.

Meanwhile, as electric co-ops work around the clock to restore power, officials ask the public to be aware of the following safety precautions:

- \* Fallen power lines can be energized and deadly. Assume that any line is conducting electricity.
- \* Remember that lines covered by water and downed trees are difficult to see. Do not attempt to cut trees near power lines.
- \* Water is a strong electricity conductor, so stay away from flooded or wet areas.
- \* If you use a backup generator, never connect it directly to your home's main circuit breaker. A generator that is directly connected to your home's wiring can backfeed onto the power lines connected to your home, seriously injuring or electrocuting line crews who are working to restore power.
- \* Use generators in only well-ventilated areas—never indoors—and plug appliances directly into them.
- \* Before returning to your home, make sure that authorities have declared the area safe.
- \* Upon returning home, make sure the main electrical switch to your house is off before entering.

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