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LIVINGSTON - Governor Rick Perry met with Sam Houston Electric Cooperative officials Thursday to show his appreciation for the long hours and hard work being put into restoring power to the cooperative's system after a devastating blow by Hurricane Ike.

"The cooperative folks and Entergy are doing a whale of a job getting power back on," Governor Perry said. "Be patient. This is not our first rodeo."

Five days after a storm twice as devastating as Hurricane Rita in 2005 passed through Sam Houston EC's service territory, approximately 33% of the Co-op's electrical distribution system has been restored. With the aid of nearly 3,000 crewmembers from around the United States, as well as County and State Emergency Operations Centers, significant progress continues to be the outcome of each day. As of midday Friday, the Cooperative had restored power to more than 50 percent of its members and was ahead of initial restoration projections.

"This spirit of cooperation makes me proud to be a Texan and proud to be associated with those who know how to get things done," Perry said.

Executives at Sam Houston EC discussed with the governor the importance of strong local leadership during a crisis such as Hurricane Ike and how the combined efforts of all East Texas cooperatives are making it possible to restore power to members quickly and effectively.

"In a manner of speaking, Hurricane Rita made us better," said Kyle Kuntz, Sam Houston EC's General Manager and CEO. "The lessons learned from Rita enabled us to improve our efforts to effectively and safely restore power to our members in a disaster situation."

Governor Perry invited Sam Houston EC to get together after Ike restoration to discuss the use of various Co-op resources to further improve storm preparedness and response time.

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative was established in 1939 and provides service to Angelina, Hardin, Jasper, Liberty, Montgomery, Polk, San Jacinto, Trinity, Tyler and Walker counties. Today Sam Houston EC maintains close to 6,000 miles of line and serves approximately 51,000 members. The cooperative is one of 10 not-for-profit electric distribution cooperatives within the umbrella group of East Texas Electric Cooperative.

For further updates, please visit "Storm Central" at www.samhouston.net.