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EAST TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES WORK TO RESTORE POWER TO MEMBERS

AUSTIN--In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, 10 East Texas electric distribution cooperatives are working around the clock to restore power to homes, farms, businesses and public facilities. The cooperatives, working individually and through their affiliated generation and transmission cooperative, East Texas Electric Cooperative (ETEC), continue to make progress in their restoration efforts.

Even before the storm made landfall in Texas, ETEC and its member distribution cooperatives were taking steps to be prepared to address potential power outages throughout their service territories in East Texas.

“Before Ike had made landfall, our distribution cooperatives had already arranged for over 2,500 utility contractor line crew members to come to East Texas to help us quickly restore power for our members. This advanced planning ensured that we had qualified, experienced workers available as soon as the storm passed, allowing us to immediately begin restoration efforts,” said Edd Hargett, General Manager of ETEC.

The East Texas cooperatives’ efforts also involved providing in-depth communication to both local and state elected officials concerning the status of the cooperatives’ work and the plans for restoration. The cooperatives utilized lessons learned from prior natural disasters, including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, to arrange for housing facilities, assets and manpower to be ready for any contingency.

In addition, the cooperatives’ restoration efforts have benefited greatly from having experienced members of its team working at the state’s Emergency Operations Center located in Austin, Texas. These team members have been able to quickly coordinate the efforts of the cooperatives with those of the state, allowing for the immediate exchange of vital restoration information by and between the cooperatives, the state, and investor-owned utilities. The team members have also played an important role in coordinating the delivery of privately-contracted resources such as food, ice, water, and fuel for the cooperatives and their respective work crews.

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“At Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, we are working closely with our fellow member cooperatives, such as Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative, Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative, and Houston County Electric Cooperative to actively communicate with representatives of Entergy Texas, Oncor Electric Delivery and SWEPCO to facilitate the timely and orderly restoration of power. Together we are working to resolve obstacles which might unnecessarily extend the restoration of power to critical locations in East Texas such as seats of government, evacuation centers, hospitals, extended care facilities, as well as our member residents, farms and businesses,” said Kyle Kuntz, General Manager of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative. He continued, “By maintaining close communication with our power suppliers, we hope to keep the delays in power restoration to an absolute minimum.”

ETEC is made up of 10 not-for-profit electric distribution cooperatives: Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative, Cherokee County Electric Cooperative, Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative, Houston County Electric Cooperative, Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative, Panola-Harrison Electric Cooperative, Rusk County Electric Cooperative, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, Upshur Rural Electric Cooperative and Wood County Electric Cooperative. ETEC’s mission is to provide low cost, reliable power to its members.

For on-going updates on these cooperatives’ progress in East Texas, please visit www.etc.coop/.