



April 7, 2021

Ms. Kathryn Bowman
Executive Counsel
Louisiana Public Service Commission
Galvez Building – 12th Floor
602 North 5th Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70825

Re: Winter Storm 2021 Follow Up Questions

Dear Ms. Bowman,

Attached are the responses of Pointe Coupee Electric Membership Corporation (“PC Electric”) to questions posed by the LPSC by correspondence dated March 1, 2021, regarding the February 2021 Winter Storm. As per the instructions, a copy of PC Electric’s response is being provided to each Commissioner.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me. Thank you for your courtesy and assistance with this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer J. Vosburg

Attorney for Pointe Coupee Electric
Membership Corporation

Attachment



PC Electric Response to LPSC Winter Storm Questions

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1. *How many MW of generation were offline or otherwise subject to unplanned outages during the Winter Storms?*

PC Electric does not own or operate generation. This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

2. *What were all identified causes of storm related outages for generation during the Winter Storms for your system? Please also indicate what was the main contributing factor.*

PC Electric does not own or operate generation. This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

3. *How many miles of distribution and transmission lines do you own and manage in Louisiana? Please separate your response by distribution and transmission.*

PC Electric owns 51 miles of transmission lines and 1,068 miles of distribution lines.

4. *Did any part of your bulk transmission system suffer unplanned outages as a result of the Winter Storm? Please include the following in your response:*

PC Electric did not have any of its transmission lines suffer unplanned outages as a result of the Winter Storm.

- a. *The length of lines affected; **Not applicable.***
- b. *The specific cause of the outage; **Not applicable.***
- c. *The time span each line was offline; **Not applicable.***
- d. *The expected return to full service time and date; and/or **Not applicable.***
- e. *The actual return to service of these lines. **Not applicable.***

5. *Was any of the utility's bulk transmission system or generating units offline due to planned maintenance when the Winter Storm event was declared?*

PC Electric did not have any of its transmission lines offline during the Winter Storm. As stated in response to Question 2, PC Electric does not own or operate generation.

If yes, please provide:

- a. *The name of the transmission system and/or generating unit(s);*
- b. *The size (KV) and length of the transmission lines, if applicable;*
- c. *Why such maintenance was scheduled in February 2021 as opposed to another time period.*

6. *What was the average restoration time for power outages due to storm damage from the Winter Storms?*

PC Electric's average restoration time for power outages due to the Winter Storm was 4.5 hours.

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7. *How heavily do you rely on contracted crews (compared to your own linemen) to restore power during normal outages?*

PC Electric restoration for normal, non-emergency events is conducted by PC Electric linemen.

8. *How heavily did you rely on contracted crews (compared to your own linemen) to restore power during the Winter Storms?*

PC Electric utilized one three-man crew of additional linemen, one six-man right of way crew and additional backup crews as needed during the Winter Storm.

9. *Could any of those outages been prevented with different preparation or enhanced vegetation maintenance prior to the Winter Storms?*

- a. *If outages were caused by fallen or sagging tree limbs, could those outages have been prevented with better vegetation maintenance by your company?*

PC Electric had one customer outage that was due to a right of way issues as result of the customer not allowing PC Electric to trim the problem tree to the PC Electric specifications. After the customer experienced the outage, the customer allowed PC Electric to trim the tree as needed.

- b. *Please provide all locations within your service area that were included within your vegetation maintenance schedule over the past two years (2019-2020) and the first 2 months of 2021.*

PC Electric has a three-year vegetation management rotation, which means every circuit is in the rotation for vegetation management. PC Electric's right of way management on its system for the year 2019 included North Pointe Coupee, Gross Tete and Lakeland areas. In 2020, areas targeted included the geographic areas of South Iberville Parish, the City of New Roads, Morganza, Erwinville, as well as the entire transmission system. In the first two months of 2021, PC Electric has completed its vegetation management in the areas of North Pointe Coupee and Morganza.

- c. *Please provide the locations in your service area that received the most scheduled vegetation maintenance within the two years (2019-2020) and the first 2 months of 2021.*

The PC Electric areas that have seen the most vegetation maintenance in the last two years and the first two months of 2021 are North Pointe Coupee, Erwinville, and South Iberville Parish (Bayou Sorrell/Pigeon and Gross Tete areas).

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- d. *Please provide the locations in your service area that received the least scheduled vegetation maintenance within the past two years (2019-2020) and the first 2 months of 2021.*

PC Electric has a three-year rotation for vegetation management for its system, thus ensuring all circuits are inspected and trimmed as needed every three years with additional trimming of trouble trees and areas of heavy and rapid vegetation growth as observed over multiple years.

- e. *Please provide the locations with the most distribution grid damage due to fallen or sagging trees or tree limbs during the Winter Storms.*

Only one location in Bayou Sorrell experienced an outage due to one very large Live Oak tree which the member has since allowed PC Electric to trim after experiencing an outage.

- i. *If possible, please explain how many customers lost power due to the vegetation damage in these locations?*

A total of 531 PC Electric customers in the Bayou Sorrell area lost power due to heavy icing on the above mentioned large Live Oak tree limb falling onto the distribution line.

10. *How much of your total operating budget is dedicated to vegetation maintenance in Louisiana? Please provide both a percent of total budget and dollar amount.*

PC Electric dedicates approximately \$990K or 14% of its operating budget to vegetation management.

11. *Please provide a narrative explanation of the “winterization” procedures and protocols utilized by the utility for each of its generating facilities and verification that those procedures and protocols were followed.*

PC Electric does not own or operate any generation. This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

- a. *Please indicate whether there are any winterization procedures that were not performed on any of the utility’s generating units for this winter season and why such procedures were not performed.*

PC Electric does not own or operate any generation. This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

Questions Pertaining to Rolling Blackouts:

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12. *Please describe the procedures used by the RTOs and by you to determine which load should be shed and for what duration.*

PC Electric currently relies on Cleco Cajun/LaGen to provide instructions from MISO or the transmission provider regarding load shed events.

13. *Did your utility undergo in any mandated or self-imposed rolling blackouts?*

PC Electric did not undergo any mandated or self-imposed rolling blackouts. Therefore the following subparts of Question 13 are not applicable to PC Electric.

- a. *If you did execute rolling blackouts, how much time lead time did you receive from when you knew a blackout would occur to when the blackout took place for the end user? Please include a timeline of all notices received from MISO or SPP (as applicable) regarding the necessity to begin load shedding.*
- i. *In that time, were the effected customers notified in preparation?*
- ii. *Were the effected customers notified during or after the rolling blackout?*
- iii. *If effected customers were notified of a rolling blackout, what mode of communication was used?*
- iv. *If effected customers were notified before or during, were they given a timeline of how long the blackout would occur? Was that timeline accurate?*
- b. *If the blackout was mandated, who made that decision and was a recommended time period given for how long the blackouts needed / should last?*
- c. *If you did execute rolling blackouts, how long did the blackouts last? Please provide a shortest, longest, and average time of the rolling blackouts.*
- d. *Please indicate the amount of industrial, commercial and/or residential load tripped off/shed during the Winter Storms, including the number of customers in each class and the number of MW by region and/or location.*
- e. *If you did execute rolling blackouts, were you able to target those blackouts in order to:*
- i. *Lessen the impact on vulnerable customers, such as, but not limited to, those needed electricity for health reasons or those customers who were just getting their power back after multiple days?*
1. *If not, is there something different that can be done in the future to potentially achieve this?*
- ii. *Ensure the most power was conserved during a rolling black while potentially affecting the least customers? For instance, were you able to conserve energy by shutting off closed commercial customers and therefore spare shutting off residential customers trying to stay warm in their home?*
2. *If not, is there something different that can be done in the future to potentially achieve this?*
14. *How many of your meters were turned off intentionally due to rolling blackouts versus lost power naturally due to storm damage from the Winter Storms?*

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No PC Electric meters were turned off intentionally due to rolling blackouts.

15. *Were any Load Modifying Resources (“LMRs”), including interruptible load, utilized during the Winter Storms?*

No load modify resources or interruptible load were utilized during the Winter Storm.

- a. *If yes, please provide:*
- i. *The type of LMR;*
 - ii. *The total number of MW of LMR; and*
 - iii. *The duration of their use.*
- b. *If no, please provide identify any interruptible customers who were not interrupted during the Winter Storm and provide a narrative as to why they were not interrupted. Included with this response, please also identify any interruptible load that did not fulfill its obligation to interrupt load when called.*

Questions Pertaining to Fuel and Generation Needs throughout the Winter Storms

16. *Please describe the impact of the Winter Storms on fuel costs and the expected impact on upcoming utility bills.*

PC Electric has billed its customers for the February time period which included the Winter Storm. While bills trended higher, the significant driver was higher usage due to the extreme cold weather. The current formulaic nature of PC Electric’s current wholesale contract did not result in extreme swings in underlying pricing.

17. *Please describe any factors that limited the ability to import fuel to serve load and quantify the level of imports that were limited.*

This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

18. *Please indicate whether there were any fuel suppliers who failed or refused to deliver the contracted quantities of fuel during the Winter Storms. If there were any failures or refusal of delivery, please indicate:*

- a. *The name of the fuel supplier;*
- b. *The amount of fuel that was not delivered;*
- c. *The generating unit(s) to which fuel was not delivered;*
- d. *The reason provided by the fuel counterparty for failure to deliver; and*
- e. *Whether or not that generating unit had to cease or curtail operations as a result of the failure of the fuel supplier to deliver contracted-for quantities.*

This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

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19. *What are your suggestions on how to spread the fuel costs through the Fuel Adjustment Clause ("FAC") such that these costs are not incurred on a single bill?*

This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

20. *What are your suggestions on other ways to share the risk of such effects to the FAC rather than flowing those costs through to customer bills?*

This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

21. *How much did the price of fuel go up during the Winter Storms and for how long did it stay at those peak prices?*

PC Electric's fuel adjustment for the month of February 2021 was less than the previous month of January 2021.

22. *Ultimately, who bears the risk of Locational Marginal Pricing ("LMP") changes throughout MISO? Throughout SPP?*

The impact of LMP changes is a complex issue that impacts all parties directly or indirectly in the long or short term. However, for the purpose of this particular issue under the subheading of Fuel and Generation Needs throughout the Winter Storm, PC Electric states that the LMP changes in MISO and SPP did not have an impact on the PC Electric customers during this Winter Storm.

23. *Could different measures have been taken in preparation for the Winter Storms in order to prevent fuel shortages? If so, why were those measures not taken?*

- a. *Should these measures have been taken when the Winter Storms were forecasted in weather reports?*

This question is not applicable to PC Electric.

Questions pertaining to customer service and communication:

24. *How many customers do you serve in the state of Louisiana?*

PC Electric serves 10,538 customers in the state of Louisiana as of February 2021.

25. *How many customer service representatives do you have in Louisiana answering phone calls or making live calls to your customers? Please provide the job title and business address for each of these employees.*

PC Electric employs six customer service employees at 2506 False River Drive, New Roads, LA 70760. The employee titles are: Manager of Member Services, Customer Representative, Member Records Specialist, Head Billing Specialist, Billing Specialist and Head Cashier.

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26. *Do you make live phone calls (non-recording) to communicate to your customers?*

PC Electric makes and receives live calls to customers in normal and emergency events. In addition, PC Electric utilizes a One Call system to send out bulk outage and restoration information.

27. *Do you answer phones with live personnel or use pre-recorded messages to answer phone calls?*

PC Electric utilizes live personnel to answer calls.

28. *Do you have a local (area code within your Louisiana service territory) customer service number, or do you utilize a 1-800 number?*

PC Electric does have a local area code and a 1-800 number.

a. *Please explain the advantages or disadvantages of utilizing a local number over a 1-800 number or vice versa.*

PC Electric utilizes both.

29. *Does your company have local, customer service offices or facilities within your Louisiana service area?*

PC Electric has one central and local Customer Service office located at 2506 False River Drive, New Roads, LA 70760.

a. *If so, please explain any perceived or realized advantages of such local facilities.*

PC Electric believes it is important to be easily accessible and visible to its customers through a local customer service office.

30. *On average, when a customer calls your customer service number, how long does it take for them to reach a live person who can answer their questions?*

PC Electric customers always speak with a live attendant when calling the office.

a. *Will that live person always be in Louisiana?*

Yes.

b. *Do customers have to press extension numbers to reach a live person?*

Only in high call situations would a customer potentially get placed in a que/on hold.

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31. *Are your customer service representatives able to communicate directly to other departments of your utility operations in order to get helpful, accurate information efficiently for customers calling in?*

PC Electric Customer Service Representatives have access to operations employees to distribute accurate information efficiently to our customers.

32. *Do you utilize text notifications to communicate with your customers? Did this service work during these past Winter Storms?*

PC Electric utilizes a One Call System that can leave voice or text messages for high volume emergency outages. This system was not needed during this Winter Event for PC Electric.

33. *Do you utilize automated phone calls to communicate with your customers?*

PC Electric utilizes a One Call System that is an automated voice and text system to communicate with our customers during high volume, emergency events.

34. *Do you utilize email notifications to communicate with your customers?*

PC Electric does not utilize email systems to communicate outage information.

35. *Do you have personnel dedicated to monitoring social media pages related to your company as well as social media pages in general and social media trends within your service territory in order to further understand any problems that may be arising for your customers and/or communicate directly with customers?*

PC Electric does have dedicated employees to monitor PC Electric social media Pages and Social Media in general to identify social media trends in our service territory that may indicate trends or problems developing on our system and in the communities we serve.

- a. *Do you answer questions your customers post on social media?*

PC Electric does answer questions as much as possible to update our customers for status of geographic areas and circuits. Outages must be reported online or called in.

- b. *Do you find a social media presence is helpful in responding to your customers?*

Social media is very helpful in responding to and updating our customers. As a small utility, social media is one of the most effective tools we have been able to utilize to communicate with not only our customers, but especially for rural and for elderly members whose family can monitor and respond as needed to assure the safety of those at risk members.

36. *Do you have an automated or advanced meter system?*

- a. *If so, did it function/perform properly during the Winter Storms? Why or why not? Please support with examples and evidence.*

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PC Electric is in the process of development and approval by the LPSC of an AMS.

37. Does your utility utilize an online outage map accessible to customers?
a. Was that map accurate during the Winter Storms? Why or why not?

PC Electric does not currently have an online outage map. PC Electric is working toward a vision that by 2025, it will have implemented an AMS that will culminate with a mapping and outage management system that will have online outage maps.

38. Are your systems able to identify whether a customer has power or does not have power?
a. If yes, was this function working properly during the Winter Storms?
b. If yes, are you able to therefore communicate with customers who have power differently than customers who do have power?

PC Electric does not have any capabilities to detect whether a customer has power or not remotely. This capability will be included in the applied for AMS system currently under review by the LPSC.

- c. At any point during the Winter Storms, did your company ask customers who did not have service to curtail their usage?

PC Electric did not ask any customers to curtail service during with the Winter Storm.

39. If your company realizes their customer service or communications systems are not working, what is your company's response to this issue? What mitigation measures are taken to address any malfunctions? What mitigation measures are taken to explain any deficiencies to your customers?

If PC Electric communication systems are not working, PC Electric has an emergency voice over internet phone service that can be utilized. In addition, online outage reporting through our website and social media are then elevated as our primary communication rather than live Customer Service representatives. The mitigation measures taken to assure we can communicate with our customers include multiple fiber/broadband services to the PC Electric main office. Again, social media and the bulk One Call communications plans are used to mitigate potential communications between PC Electric and our customers.

40. Do you have a public relation, customer service, or other team in charge of crafting and sending out notifications and public outreach messages to your customers?

PC Electric has a Director of Member Services that manages, oversees and crafts specific notifications and public outreach messages prior to, during and after emergency events that have the potential to or did cause large numbers of outages on our system.

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41. *Do you target messages based on relevancy to your customers or simply send general notifications across your entire service territory, regardless of its relevancy for each customer?*
- a. *If the answer depends on a scenario, please expand on those different scenarios to provide a full understanding of how your teams attempt to best communicate with customers.*
 - b. *Does your company believe that targeted messages (or different forms of messaging) are more useful in ensuring accurate, relevant communication to customers? Why or why not?*
 - c. *What are barriers to communicating tailored, relevant information to each customer that would cause a company to rely only on general communications?*

PC Electric has the capability to craft generic warning information relevant to the entire PC Electric system. In addition, we can utilize One Call (voice/text system) to segment and deliver specific information to our customer geographically.

- a. ***In the instance of large threats such as hurricanes, PC Electric uses social media blasts to communicate impending or potential threats that are forecast on social media, web site, and One Call system. In the instance of scattered thunderstorms and severe weather, we can segment and send out One Call and text messages to specific geographic areas on our system. PC Electric still puts segmented information on outages on social media as we have learned many people not on our system follow us because they have family that they monitor and this information helps them make decisions as they need to know if the power is out and the estimated time to restoration.***
- b. ***PC Electric believes targeted messages provide more accurate information. This communication however is much harder to accomplish without an AMS system. We have learned that posting pictures and specific damages of geographic areas on social media can improve customer's understanding and patience during large outages.***
- c. ***The largest barrier to communicating targeted messaging to our customers is being able to get accurate customer information and keeping that information current so that the customer can receive text messages, voice messages and other social media targeted messaging.***

42. *Were you able to get accurate information to your customers before, during and after the Winter Storms?*

PC Electric believes that it was successful in getting information to our customers before, during and after the Winter Storm.

43. *What is your utility's total yearly operating budget?*

PC Electric's total yearly operations budget is \$6,914,298. This amount excludes purchase power, interest, depreciation, and tax expense.

PC Electric Response to LPSC Winter Storm Questions

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44. *How much of your utility's total yearly operating budget is allocated to customer service? Please provide dollar number and percentage.*

a. Please break down the dollars allocated to customer service based on categories your utility spends in, such as, but not limited to:

i. How much money is spent on human customer service representatives?

ii. How much money is spent on automated systems?

iii. How much money is spent on physical customer service locations (places where the public can contact either physically or by telephone an individual dedicated to handling their customer service issue)?

PC Electric's total yearly operations budget dedicated to Customer Service is approximately \$534,000. Human Customer Service representatives totals approximately \$374,000; approximately \$143,000 is spent on automated systems; and phone service costs total approximately \$23,000 annually. Customer Service Representatives are located in the PC Electric main office in New Roads.

45. *How much does it cost (rough estimate based on current employment) to hire and maintain one customer service representative?*

PC Electric currently spends annually \$75,000 to hire and maintain one customer service representative.

46. *Do you feel your customer service and communication allowed for your customers to adequately prepare for events that unfolded during the Winter Storms?*

PC Electric feels that our customer service and communications allowed for our customers to adequately prepare for the Winter Storm.

47. *Do you believe useful and helpful customer service was provided by your company to your customers during the Winter Storms?*

PC Electric feels we provided useful and helpful information to our members and customers during the Winter Storm.

48. *Based on your company's customer service performance in the Winter Storms, does your company plan on increasing the amount of budget they allocate to customer service?*

a. Will your company ask for a rate increase to do so?

PC Electric will maintain the current level of customer service it had for the Winter Storm. PC Electric does not foresee the need for a rate increase for customer service only. PC Electric is currently under the LPSC review for an AMS system that will be an important

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investment to continue improving the customer experience. It is PC Electric's goal to provide a world class customer service to its members.

Closing Questions

49. *Please provide all temperature forecasts you received for your Louisiana service territory (and the source of those forecasts) for February 14-20, 2021 and the actual temperatures experienced on those dates.*

PC Electric participated in and received updates from its Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness who provided forecasted temperatures from the National Weather Service for New Orleans/Baton Rouge. PC Electric does not use the service of a contract meteorologist.

50. *In your opinion, was your utility adequately prepared for the Winter Storms?*
a. *Did you customers benefit from your level of preparedness?*

PC Electric believes that it was adequately prepared for the Winter Storm but always seeks to improve its preparation and customer service.

51. *In your opinion, was your response to the Winter Storms sufficient or to a standard of excellence your customers deserve?*

PC Electric seeks to avoid all customer outages but understands that events such as the Winter Storm place an increased emphasis on customer restoration due to the extreme weather conditions. While PC Electric's system performed well during the Winter Storm, we will always strive to improve our performance and give the best possible service to our customers.