



South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association

P.O. BOX 4037
HOUMA, LOUISIANA 70361

April 7, 2021

Louisiana Public Service Commissioners
P.O. Box 91154
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

RE: Winter Storm Follow Up Questions:

Dear Commissioners,

Please find the attached South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association's (SLECA) responses to the Louisiana Public Service Commission's Winter Storm Follow Up questions. A hard copy will be sent via certified mail for your records.

If you have any questions or require additional information, don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


Joe Ticheli
General Manager

Ecc: Brett Ledet, Manager of Engineering - SLECA
Matt Peters, Operations Superintendent – SLECA
Benjamin Adams, Manager of Finance and Corporate Services – SLECA

Attachment

Questions pertaining to the Distribution Grid

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

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA does not own any generation facilities.

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.

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA does not own any generation facilities.

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

SLECA owns 1,404 miles of distribution lines. SLECA owns 27.1 miles of transmission 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:

- a. The length of lines affected;
- b. The specific cause of the outage;
- c. The time span each line was offline;
- d. The expected return to full service time and date; and/or
- e. The actual return to service of these lines.

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA's transmission lines are owned/operated by SLECA and are not part of the Bulk Electric System.

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? 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.

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA does not own any facilities (transmission or generation) which is a part of the Bulk Electric System.

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

SLECA only had one outage during the Winter Storms. The outage was the result of a single distribution transformer being overloaded which affected only four (4) residential customers. The outage lasted for 30 minutes.

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

Under normal operating conditions (and weather conditions), SLECA does not rely on contracted crews to restore normal outages within its service territory with the exception of outages that occur in remote locations which require special equipment (which SLECA does not own).

8. How heavily do you rely on contracted crews (compared to your own lineman) to restore power during Winter Storms?

SLECA did not have any major outages and therefore did not rely on any contractors during the Winter Storms. Historically, SLECA has not had to hire contracted crews for Winter Storms.

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

- a. If outages were caused by fallen or sagging tree limbs, could those outages have been prevented with better vegetation maintenance by your company?
- 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.
- c. Please provide the locations in your service area that were included within your vegetation maintenance within the two years (2019-2020) and the first 2 months of 2021.
- 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.
- e. Please provide the locations with the most distribution grid damage due to fallen or sagging trees or tree limbs during the Winter Storms.
 - i. If possible, please explain how many customers lost power due to the vegetation damage in these locations.

Not applicable to SLECA. SLECA only had one (1) outage during the Winter Storms which was caused by an overloaded distribution transformer serving four (4) residential customers.

SLECA has implemented a very aggressive vegetation maintenance (ROW Maintenance and Line Clearance Program) which is submitted to the LPSC annually. The vegetation maintenance for SLECA's entire system is implemented in a 3-year cycle, meaning that 1/3 of the system is cut every year and no section of SLECA's system goes more than 2 years without being maintained. Some areas are visited more frequently depending on vegetation growth and the vegetation's proximity to our lines.

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.

SLECA's total operating budget is \$50,172,972. SLECA's yearly vegetation maintenance budget is \$675,000, or 1.34% of the total operating budget.

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.

- 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.

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA does not own any generating facilities.

Questions Pertaining to Rolling Blackouts

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

Not applicable to SLECA.

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

- a. If you did execute rolling blackouts, how much 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 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 needing 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 blackout 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 homes?

1. If not, is there something different that can be done in the future to potentially achieve this?

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA did not undergo any rolling blackouts during the Winter Storm.

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 Storm?

Not applicable to SLECA as SLECA did not undergo any rolling blackouts during the Winter Storm.

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

- 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 identify any interruptible customers who were not interrupted during the Winter Storm and provide a narrative as to why they 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.

Not applicable to SLECA.

Questions Pertaining to Fuel and Generation Needs throughout the Winter Storm

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

At this time, the Cooperative’s fuel charge is not anticipated to be impacted based on the Winter Storms, which is a direct result of the Cooperative’s all-requirements contract with its wholesale provider, Cleco Cajun.

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

Not applicable to SLECA.

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.

Not applicable to SLECA.

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?

See Response to Question #16 above.

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

See response to Question #16 above.

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?

Not applicable to SLECA as the cooperative does not procure fuel.

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

Not applicable to SLECA as the cooperative does not procure fuel.

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?

Not applicable to SLECA

Questions pertaining to customer service and communications

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

SLECA serves a total of 21,770 customers.

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.

SLECA has a 10 customer service representatives who are responsible for answering phone calls. Their titles and business address are listed below:

- Member Services Supervisor, 2028 Coteau Road, Houma, LA 70364
- (2) Member Services Representatives, 2028 Coteau Road, Houma, LA 70364
- Executive Assistant, 2028 Coteau Road, Houma, LA 70364
- Manager of Finance and Corporate Services, 2028 Coteau Road, Houma, LA 70364
- General Manager, 2028 Coteau Road, Houma, LA 70364
- Member Services Supervisor, 2903 Lake Palorde Road, Amelia, LA 70340

- Member Services Representative, 2903 Lake Palorde Road, Amelia, LA 70340
- General Clerk, 2903 Lake Palorde Road, Amelia, LA 70340
- Branch Manager, 2903 Lake Palorde Road, Amelia, LA 70340

In addition to the personnel listed above, SLECA has an additional 10 employees in different departments that assist members' phone calls in the event of an emergency or outage.

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

All phone calls to and from SLECA are non-recording.

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

All phone calls are answered via the use of live personnel. During normal business hours, SLECA's member services department is responsible for answering the phones. After business hours, a 24-hour answering service is under contract with SLECA to ensure every call is answered via live personnel.

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

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

SLECA has both a local customer service number and a toll free 1-800 number; however, if a customer dials the 1-800 number, it is connected to the phone lines at our main office. In our opinion, the advantage of having a local number is the ability for a customer or general member of the public to make contact with/speak directly to a live person at SLECA, or for them to have the ability to come to our local offices to do the same.

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

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

SLECA has two offices within its service territory. One is located in Houma, LA (Terrebonne Parish) and the other in Amelia, LA (St. Mary Parish). We believe the advantage of having local offices is the reachability of a representative at the cooperative by any one of our consumers (or members of the general public).

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?

a. Will that live person always be in Louisiana?

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

When a customer calls SLECA's customer service number, they speak immediately to a live person as SLECA's phone lines are monitored 24 hours a day by live personnel. The live person answering the phones are always in Louisiana within SLECA's service territory. Customers do not have to press extension numbers to reach a live person.

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?

Yes. The customer service representatives are able to communicate directly to all departments and to personnel throughout both office locations.

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

SLECA currently does not utilize text notifications for communication with customers. SLECA is in the process of researching automated texting and is looking into implementing automated text messaging in the future.

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

SLECA does not utilize automated phone calls to communicate with customers.

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

SLECA does not utilize email notifications to communicate with customers.

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?

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

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

Yes. SLECA has a Facebook page and a representative of SLECA monitors the page 24 hours a day. SLECA does not answer questions from customers via social media. SLECA's Facebook page is utilized to keep our members up-to-date on any SLECA related issues, happenings, and power outages. SLECA is diligent in reminding our customers that SLECA does not answer any questions or posts on its Facebook page and reminds our consumers that should they have any questions/concerns, that they should call our office.

36. Do you have an automated or advance meter system?

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

SLECA does not currently have an automated or advanced meter system; however, SLECA is currently in the process of researching an AMI system.

37. Does your utility utilize an online map accessible to customers?

a. Was that map accurate during the Winter Storms? Why or why not?

SLECA does not utilize an online map; however, SLECA is in the process of researching an online mapping system in the future.

38. Are your systems able to identify whether a customer has power or does not have power?
- If yes, was this function working properly during the Winter Storms?
 - If yes, are you therefore able to communicate with customers who have power differently than customers who do not have power?
 - At any point during the Winter Storms, did your company ask customers who did not have service to curtail their usage?

SLECA's systems are not able to identify whether or not a customer has power.

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?

SLECA has consistently and historically done everything possible to ensure adequate communications with our members. In the event that SLECA's communications systems are not working, SLECA can and has (in the past) implemented several different options of communicating with our customers. For instance, SLECA has posted flyers at each of the offices, made direct phone calls to customers, have had SLECA personnel deliver door hanger messages to our customers' residences, send letters in the mail ahead of time (if possible), post messages to our Facebook page and SLECA's website ahead of time (if possible), etc.

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?

Yes. SLECA's IT department is responsible for crafting and sending out notifications and public outreach messages. All messages are QA/QC'd internally and approved by the General Manager before the notifications are made public.

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?

- 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.
- 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?
- What are barriers to communicating tailored, relevant information to each customer that would cause a company to rely only on general communications?
 - SLECA's messages to its members are typically general notifications across our entire territory; however, some of the messages are very specific in nature. For example, SLECA often sends messages regarding outages with very specific information such as what caused the outage, expected outage times, and the areas of our service territory which will be affected.

- SLECA does not believe that targeted messages are necessarily more useful in ensuring accurate, relevant communication to our customers. We believe in being transparent to all of our members regarding any issues or happenings because they are our owners and we believe they have the right to know, even if they are not affected directly.
- One of the major barriers to communication with our members is the availability of internet service. A large portion of our consumers are elderly people who do not know how to navigate new technologies nor even have the internet which can create a barrier for communication.

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

Yes. SLECA communications were unaffected by the Winter Storm.

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

SLECA's total yearly operating budget is \$50,172,972.

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)?

- SLECA spends a total of \$850,000 on human customer service representatives (1.7% of the yearly operating budget)
- SLECA does not spend any money on automated systems
- SLECA spends \$1,667,829 on customer service locations (3.3% of yearly operating budget)

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

It costs SLECA approximately \$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?

Yes.

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

Yes. Our customer service, and service (for the most part) in general, was uninterrupted during the Winter Storms.

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?

SLECA does not plan on increasing the budget that is currently allocated to customer service at this time.

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.

Aarron Graham (ALEC Director of Loss Control) sent emails to ALEC Co-op general managers and operations personnel that included forecasts and graphics for ice, snow and sleet accumulation on the following dates:

2/13 - email sent at 10:30 am (forecast graphic 2/13 midnight - 2/16 6:00 am)

2/14 - email sent at 10:14 am (forecast graphic 2/14 midnight - 2/17 6:00 am)

2/17 - email sent at 8:57 am (forecast graphic 2/17 6:00 am - 2/20 6:00 am)

This information was provided to Aarron Graham from Sid Sperry who owns SPIDI Technologies, LLC based out of Guthrie, OK. Sid has owned this business for 10 years and owns licensing agreements for "Sperry-Piltz Ice Accumulation Index" (or SPIA Index) with Global Reach Internet Services of Ames, IA (host of the NationalOutages.com website).

Sid also has a Licensing Agreement with the international weather services company, DTN, headquartered in Burnsville, MN. These contracts are ongoing, and provide subscription services to electric cooperatives, municipal utilities, and several communications companies as well as Emergency Management officials in several states. SPIDI Technologies, LLC also provides ice impact forecasting for the high voltage transmission grid across the continental United States to officials at the US DOE.

Sid retired January 31, 2021 from the Oklahoma Statewide. In that role, Sid provided ALEC with hurricane forecasting in addition to ALEC's contract with the Coastal Weather Research Center located in Mobile, AL.

50. In your opinion, was your utility adequately prepared for the Winter Storms?

a. Did your customers benefit from your level of preparedness?

Yes. SLECA was adequately prepared for the Winter Storms.

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

Being that SLECA was (for the most part) unaffected by the Winter Storms, it is our belief that our responses were sufficient and meet our customers' needs.