

Washington-St.Tammany Electric Cooperative Inc.

**Response to Staff's March 1, 2021 Follow-Up Questions from Winter Storm
Event**

Questions for All Electric Utilities

Questions pertaining to the Distribution Grid:

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

36 MW

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.

Trees out of Right of Way leaning over and breaking from weight of ice accumulation

3. How many miles of distribution and transmission lines do you own and manage in Louisiana?

Please separate your response by distribution and transmission.

Distribution: 5,299 miles

Transmission: 171 miles

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:

Yes

a. The length of lines affected:

34.32 miles

b. The specific cause of the outage:

Equipment failure

c. The time span each line was offline:

120 minutes

d. The expected return to full service time and date; and/or

3/17/21

e. The actual return to service of these lines.

3/17/21

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:

No

a. The name of the transmission system and/or generating unit(s);

N/A

b. The size (KV) and length of the transmission lines, if applicable;

N/A

c. Why such maintenance was scheduled in February 2021 as opposed to another time period.

N/A

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

2.70 hours

7. How heavily do you rely on contracted crews (compared to your own linemen) to restore power during normal¹ outages?

As need basis

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

As needed basis

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

No. All trees were out of maintained right of way.

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

No. WST's system is on a vegetation management program.

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.

Lacombe, East Fork, Slidell 190, Enon, Savannah Branch, Husser, Angie, Bolivar

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.

Lacombe, East Fork, Slidell 190, Enon, Savannah Branch, Husser, Angie, Bolivar

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.

Isabel, Stateline, Clifton (scheduled for 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.

East Fork, Bolivar, Stateline, Angie, Clifton

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

14,611

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.

WST's 2020 vegetation management expense was \$2,882,192. This constituted 4% of total operating expenses including cost of power, 16% of total operating expenses less cost of power, and 24% of distribution operating and maintenance expense (RUS Form 7, Lines 6 and 7).

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.

N/A

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.

N/A

Questions Pertaining to Rolling Blackouts:

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

WST does not decide which load should be shed or the duration of such load shed.

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

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.

None. WST was notified after the fact that load had been curtailed.

i. In that time, were the effected customers notified in preparation?

N/A

ii. Were the effected customers notified during or after the rolling blackout?

During

iii. If effected customers were notified of a rolling blackout, what mode of communication was used?

Social media and phone

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?

Yes, Yes

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?

LAGen/MiSO, One hour

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.

N/A

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.

12 MW, Slidell Area, Majority Residential

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?

N/A

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

Text Blast, Social Media, Media Radio Blast

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?

No

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

N/A

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?

WST did not intentionally turn off any meters due to rolling blackouts.

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

No. WST does not have LMR equipment.

a. If yes, please provide:

i. The type of LMR;

N/A

ii. The total number of MW of LMR; and

N/A

iii. The duration of their use.

N/A

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.

N/A

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.

None

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

N/A

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;

N/A

b. The amount of fuel that was not delivered;

N/A

c. The generating unit(s) to which fuel was not delivered;

N/A

d. The reason provided by the fuel counterparty for failure to deliver; and

N/A

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.

N/A

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?

N/A

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?

N/A

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?

None

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

Merchant generators and/or customers.

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?

N/A

Questions pertaining to customer service and communication:

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

53,789

25. How many customer service representatives² 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.

WST has 36 employees available for customer calls. Please note the attached schedule with employee listing.

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

No

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

Subject to certain very high-volume limitations, WST uses live personnel to answer phone calls. The cooperative may use a front-end greeting with a pre-recorded message in certain situations.

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

Both

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

WST has both a local and 1-800 numbers. Contrary to the past, both local and 800 numbers can accommodate large volumes of calls. Local numbers are sometimes perceived more favorably because the belief/perception the phone representatives are better acquainted with the customer's area. The use of 1-800 numbers have a perception that customer calls are directed to a representative that is dedicated to outage restoration. Given the state of the art of electronic mapping, communications and outage management systems, centralized call centers are most effective.

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.

WST does have four local customer service offices or facilities within its Louisiana service area. Local service offices may create a perception that the utility representatives have a better understating of their issues associated with their account billing or restoration needs. Modern mapping, the ability to access data without regard to location and the ability to communicate anywhere in the world have in reality minimized the importance of remote customer office locations.

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?

About 45 seconds. Subject to volume limitations, WST always has live persons in Louisiana to answer customer calls. To accommodate call overflow in high volume situations, the cooperative participates in a call center cooperative. To hedge against a localized disaster exhausting all the call center resources or some regional communications failure, the call center cooperative maintains operation in multiple sites throughout the United States. The call center cooperative uses a platform which provides their call center representatives with full access to customer account information. Additionally, the call center's information system is fully interfaced to WST's outage management system and consequently records outages information no differently than a WST employee.

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

Unless the customer selects an option to pay their bill using WST's automated attendant, the customer will be transferred to a live person either within WST's facilities or with WST's call center cooperative. In certain ultrahigh volume caller situations, it may become impossible to have a live person answer all calls and consequently the caller would be directed to an automated attendant.

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. Both local and remote customer service representatives are able to communicate with utility operations. Regardless of location, all customer service representatives input callers outage information into the same outage management system. Each representative has the ability to communicate with operations either electronically or verbally, if necessary.

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

No

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

WST has used automated phone calls in past storms.

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

Yes. WST uses email to notify them their bill is ready to view through a web-based browser or WST's app.

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?

The cooperative does have personnel to monitor social media pages and contact customers as well as answer question on social media.

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

Yes, the cooperative does answer questions on social media.

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

Yes

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

WST has an automated meter reading system.

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

WST has an older automated meter reading system which is only beneficial in determining nested outages which are multiple days in length.

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

Yes

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

Yes. The map is accurate because it is interfaced to the cooperative's outage management system.

38. Are your systems able to identify whether a customer has power or does not have power?

Yes

a. If yes, was this function working properly during the Winter Storms?

Yes

b. If yes, are you able to therefore communicate with customers who have power differently than customers who do have power?

Yes. WST's app can send alerts notifying customers their power has been interrupted or has been restored. Additionally, customer representatives can discuss the status of the customer's account with them.

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

Between February 15 and February 19, WST made non-targeted pleas for customers to curtail their usage through social media.

39. If your company realizes their customer service of 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?

Should some communications systems not perform as expected, WST has an information technology professional readily available to solve the issue. WST's staff will either resolve or coordinate resolution with or between data service providers, software providers, internal call center systems, outage management systems and external call center systems and personnel. Should some customer voice a complaint regarding WST's communications performance, the IT professional will contact the customer to either establish a full understanding of the problem and/or explain what occurred with previously corrected problems.

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

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?

WST sends out messages to the entire service area. These messages may have information specific to certain areas.

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 to customers. Why or why not?

N/A

b. Does your company believe that targeted messages (or different forms of messaging) are more useful in ensuring accurate, relevant communications to customers? Why or why not?

WST believe a targeted message could be useful in some situations.

c. What are barriers to communicating tailored, relevant information to each customer that should cause a company to rely only on general communications.

The information that is most relevant to customers is the specific time their power restorations will occur. Unfortunately, it is often impractical to predict the time of restoration with a degree of accuracy customers desire.

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

Yes

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

2020 Total Operating & Maintenance Expense \$77,964,000

2020 Total Operating & Maintenance Exp Less Cost of Power \$17,863,000

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

\$2,389,425 Customer Account Expense and Customer Service Information Expense, 3% of Total Cost of Operations and Maintenance, 13% of Total Cost of Operations and Maintenance Less Cost of Power.

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 of human customer service representatives.

\$1,549,102

ii. How much money is spent on automated systems?

\$416,000

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)?

\$314,622

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

Wages and benefits for a direct WST fully trained employee full is between \$75,000 and \$88,000. The cost of a leased full time equivalent employee is \$50,000 per year.

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

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?

No

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

N/A

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.

WST utilizes weather forecast from the National Weather Service. The cooperative did not archive the forecast for the period in question. The actual temperatures are as follows:

February 14	27 Degrees
February 15	19 degrees
February 16	19 degrees
February 17	21 degrees
February 18	28 degrees
February 19	25 degrees
February 20	25 degrees

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

a. Did you customers benefit from your level of performance.
Yes

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

It is WST's goal to have zero interruptions with service at an affordable price for service. WST believes it is providing an appropriate balance.

Last Name	Title	Business Address
McCrary, Chyrrl	Clerk/Dispatch	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Crain, Joshua	Clerk/Dispatch	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Taylor, Robert	Clerk/Dispatch	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Dawson, Darius	Clerk/Dispatch/Swing Assignment	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Temples, Randall	Clerk/Dispatch/Swing Assignment	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Topps, Leslie	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Adams, Melissa	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Garrett, Deborah	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Peters, Tess	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Morton, Kathleen	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Simmons, Sonja	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Holden, Beverly	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Sheridan, Debra	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Gornor, Angela	Clerk	2081 E Gause, Slidell LA 70459
Williams, Debbie	Clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Knight, Verdie	Billing Supervisor	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Hebert, Cynthia	Office Supervisor	13526 Highway 40, Folsom LA 70437
Cormier, Wanda	Office Supervisor	2081 E Gause, Slidell LA 70459
Carpenter, Kim	Office Supervisor	21504 Mire Dr, Abita Springs LA 70420
Thomas, Brenda	clerk	21504 Mire Dr, Abita Springs LA 70420
Rosevally, Darlene	clerk	21504 Mire Dr, Abita Springs LA 70420
Stodard, Talyne	clerk	21504 Mire Dr, Abita Springs LA 70420
McElveen, Lynette	clerk	13526 Highway 40, Folsom LA 70437
Causey, Pat	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Horning, Ruth	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Stinson, Joyce	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Daniels, Amy	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Williams, Jacqueline	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Moak, Erin	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Lunk, Phyllis	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Travis, Destiny	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Passman, Dedria	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Lauzon, Teri	clerk	950 Pearl St, Franklinton LA 70438
Phillips, Michelle	clerk	2081 E Gause, Slidell LA 70459
Zundel, Kortni	clerk	2081 E Gause, Slidell LA 70459
Ezell, Marie	clerk	2081 E Gause, Slidell LA 70459