Appalachian Power
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Charles Patton
President and COO

APPALACHIAN POWER®
A unit of American Electric Power

July 19, 2012

Mr. Barry Helms
Interim Town Manager
Town of Christiansburg
100 East Main Street
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Dear Mr. Helms:

Friday evening, June 29, an enormous wind and rain storm traveled across the midwest and into Virginia. The storm was part of a massive "super derecho" or straight-line wind storm that traveled close to 700 miles in 10 hours, devastating 10 states and leaving more than 4 million homes and businesses without electricity. It was as devastating as a hurricane in its destructive force, but came with little advance warning.

More than likely you, your business, your customers or your constituents lost power. In Appalachian Power's service area, a record 573,000 customers were left out of service – nearly 60 percent of the company's total customers. In Virginia, 243,000, or about half of the company's customers, were without service.

We know how difficult it was to be without electricity for such an extended period, and during prolonged record heat, no less. The hardship you faced in the wake of this disaster was with us constantly as we worked to restore service as quickly as possible.

We brought in workers from 22 states to assist in the recovery work, bringing the total workers restoring power to nearly 5,200. The storm caused extensive damage to both our distribution and transmission systems. More than 90 distribution substations were taken out of service by the storm, as well as more than 100 transmission lines. More than 1,500 poles across Appalachian's territory had to be replaced, and thousands of spans of wire were damaged.

While 95 percent of our customers were restored within nine days, some customers remained out longer. Appalachian prioritizes power restoration work by first assessing damage, restoring power to critical infrastructure such as hospitals, water and waste water systems, and removing hazards. We then prioritize outages to repair larger outages that will bring back the most customers first, and work through all remaining outages in that manner. We completed all restoration in Virginia on July 11.

This disaster presented us with several unusual challenges:

- With most major storms, from hurricanes to winter storms, we are able to predict the storm well in advance, allowing us to call in additional workers from other companies and stage them in areas most likely to be affected. This storm was not predicted by the National Weather Service nor any of the national or local meteorologists we rely on, so we had no advance resources in place.
- Most storms leave damage in concentrated areas. The super derecho caused significant damage across most of our Virginia service area, and indeed, across most of the Commonwealth.
- Because there were several million people throughout the country without power, many of the resources on which Appalachian would normally depend were occupied with restoring power in their own areas. Moreover, we were competing with other companies for resources.
- Additional storms in our service territory hampered restoration efforts and caused more outages. Four major storms on July 1, July 3, July 5 and July 8 added 105,000 new outages.
- The continuing extreme heat was a challenge for our crews, just as it was for those without power. For example, in some cases we had double tree trimming crews so that work could continue while crews alternated half an hour of work and half an hour of rest.
- Housing was a significant challenge throughout the restoration effort. In addition to using virtually all hotel space within and near our service territory, Liberty University and several West Virginia univesities provided dormitory rooms, as did several armories. Linens and/or cots had to be provided for the schools and armories.
- Communication with other companies working for us was not always smooth because most did not have GPS and data communication technologies that interfaced with our systems. This challenged our ability to provide customers with timely and accurate information on the restoration status of specific outages.

In the aftermath of the storm, there will be reviews on many levels of the disaster and Appalachian's response to it. We welcome these reviews. We hope to learn from them, as well as share what we have learned during the restoration process. For example, after the December 2009 storm we greatly enhanced our communications with emergency management organizations and city, county and state officials. As a result, communications with these groups was very effective throughout the crisis.

There were many remarkable aspects of this storm and of our recovery effort, but perhaps the most memorable for those of us at Appalachian Power was the response of our customers. Yes, customers were frustrated, hot and tired of having no electricity. But by far most people recognized and were supportive of the work we were doing and had nothing but kind words for our crews. On behalf of all of us at Appalachian Power, we sincerely thank you for your patience and support.

Sincerely,

Charles Patton

Note: if you'd like to see some interesting photos and videos we captured during storm restoration, go to www.AppalachianPower.com.