

Allison:

Hello, hello, and welcome. Welcome and good evening. Those of you who dialed in early, we see you. Thank you so much for joining us early. To everyone else who is just answering the phone, you are joining this live New Hampshire Electric Co-op Telephone Town Hall Meeting that we have for you this evening. We are currently dialing out to thousands of members, so give us a minute here as we continue our dial out.

Welcome, welcome, to everyone who is just joining. You are joining our live New Hampshire Electric Co-op Telephone Town Hall Meeting we have for you this evening. Tonight, we'll be discussing power outages and restoration. We are calling out to you this evening to open up the conversation with you.

If you have a question, please press zero on the keypad on your phone to get in line with that. You can do that now or at any time during this call. If you'd rather not go live and ask your question live over the air, that's okay. Still press zero, just let your operator know that.

Again, welcome to everyone just joining. You are live on the line with New Hampshire Electric Co-op. We have a telephone Town Hall Meeting this evening, where we will be discussing power outages and restoration. To get in line with your question this evening, please press zero on the keypad on your phone. Again, that is zero on the keypad on your phone.

Please stay on the line as we dial out to more and more members. I'll remind you, you can press zero now or at any time to get in line with a question. Also this evening, we are collecting email addresses. If you would like to sign up for our email newsletter, press seven on the keypad on your phone, and we'll take your email address that way. That is a great way for us to keep you up to date with important information, as well as promotional programs, rebates, and incentives. Again, that is seven to sign up for that e-newsletter.

I've got a couple of questions I want your opinion on. I'm going to be getting to those in just a moment, so stay on the line for those as well.

I want to welcome everyone just joining. Welcome to this live New Hampshire Electric Co-op Telephone Town Hall Meeting we have for you this evening. We have lots of information coming your way this evening, so stay on the line so you don't miss a thing. We'll be discussing power outages and restoration.

If you have a question, press zero on the keypad on your phone. I see a few people taking us up on that already. That's great. Get in line early with that question. Also press seven on the keypad on your phone if you would like to sign up for our email newsletter.

I have a series of questions I want your opinion on. First one goes like this ... I'll read it twice, and you'll just press the button on the keypad on your phone to vote. Question goes like this ... Are you aware that you can now report your

outage online or by using the SmartHub app? Press one for yes, you are aware of that, and two for no. Again, thank you all for weighing in on this. I want to know, are you aware that you can now report your outage online or by using the SmartHub app? Press one for yes and two for no.

While you weigh in on that, stay on the line. I've got two more coming right away, as soon as we weigh in on that, but I want to remind you, press zero on the keypad on your phone to get in line with your question you could ask about live over the air. If you'd rather not ask it live, go ahead, still press zero and let your operator know that. I can read your question over the air, no problem.

Also this evening, we're collecting email addresses. If you would like to sign up for our email newsletter, press seven on the keypad on your phone. That's a great way for us to keep you up to date with important information, and we also send out promotional programs there, as well as rebates and incentives. You definitely want to get on that list. Press seven for that.

With that, we are now going to move onto our second polling question of the evening. Thank you so much for everyone who weighed in on the first. Second question goes like this ... During an extended outage, do you feel that NHEC provides information in a timely manner? Press one for yes you do, and two for no you do not. Again, during an extended outage, do you feel that NHEC provides information in a timely manner? Press one for yes and two for no.

While all of our listeners weigh in on that, I want to welcome all of our new people who have just joined our call. Welcome to this live telephone Town Hall Meeting we have for you this evening. You are live on the line with New Hampshire Electric Co-op.

I'm going to be turning this over to Seth Wheeler, our communications administer here in just a moment. As we continue our dial out here, I want to tell you how to participate in this call. These calls go really well when we get your participation. Press zero on the keypad on your phone to get in line with your question. This evening, we'll be discussing power outages and restoration. Get in line with that question by pressing zero. Also this evening, you can sign up for our e-newsletter by pressing seven on the keypad on your phone.

Now I'm onto our third polling question of the evening. Again, just voting on the keypad on your phone. Question goes like this ... How would you most prefer to receive outage updates? There are four options. Listen to all four. Again, how would you most prefer to receive outage updates? One for on the website, two for text messaging, three for email, and four for social media. Again, we want to know how you would most prefer to receive outage updates. One for on the website, two for via text message, three for by email, and four for social media.

While we are just about dialed out here, I'm gonna turn this over to Seth in just a moment, but I want to remind everyone one last time here, you are all live on

the line with New Hampshire Electric. We'll be discussing power outages and restoration this evening. Press zero on the keypad on your phone to get in line with a question. Also this evening, press seven on the keypad on your phone so we can keep you up to date via email with important information, as well as promotional programs, rebates, and incentives.

With that, it is now my pleasure to turn this over to our communications administrator, Seth Wheeler. Seth, take it away.

Seth Wheeler:

Thanks, Allison. Thank you everybody for joining us tonight. We are talking about power outages, which is a topic we can all relate to. I'm sure we've all experienced that moment when everything suddenly goes dark, and modern life just stops. One minute you've got the TV on, dinner's on the stove, and the next thing you know, you're searching for a flashlight.

We know how disruptive power outages can be, and how frustrating it is to sit in the dark, wondering what's going on. Tonight, we're hoping to give you a better understanding of what is going on when power outages occur, what we're doing to prevent outages, and how you can stay as comfortable and informed as possible when the power goes out.

Here at the co-op, our goal for your electric service is 100% reliability, 100% of the time, but as we see time and time again, Mother Nature often has other plans. Power outages can be caused by all sorts of things ... car accidents, equipment failures, even animals ... but by far, the most common cause of power outages is trees and limbs that come down on power lines.

All you need to do, really, is look out the window to know that our state, New Hampshire, is one of the most heavily forested states in the country. Our service territory includes some of the most rural parts of the state. If the wind blows hard enough here, or we get too much heavy ice or snow, trees and limbs will fall on our power lines. It's just a fact of life here, no matter how hard we try to prevent it. However, we have taken significant steps in the past several years that are reducing the number and duration of outages, even during major storms.

We'll talk a little later about what we've been doing, but first, I want to walk you through a timeline of a major storm to explain how we prepare for outages, and how we restore them. Before I do that, however, I want to welcome anyone that might have just joined the call. This is the New Hampshire Electric Co-operative Telephone Town Hall Meeting. We're talking tonight about power outages, how we restore power and how you can weather an outage more comfortably.

Thanks for joining us, and just a reminder, you can press zero on your phone to ask us a question. Let's get back to our major storm scenario, here. When the

forecast calls for a major storm with the potential for widespread outages, it triggers a series of steps that we take to prepare.

First, we start following the hourly weather updates to determine where and when the storm might strike, and what the potential impact the storm may have on the electric system. We also notify our employees about the impending storm, and confirm their availability.

Here at the Co-op, every employee has a role to play in storm restoration, whether it's answering outage calls, or delivering food to line crews, or just working on lines, it's all hands on deck here when a major storm hits.

We also begin reaching out to our mutual aid partners and if necessary, line and tree contractors, putting them on standby to make sure we've got the appropriate resources available in the event they're needed. At the same time, we will work with our electrical supply vendors to make sure we're fully stocked with emergency supplies and materials at all nine of our district office locations around the state.

During this preparation time, we're also reaching out to you via the media, our website, and social media alerting you to the likelihood of power outages, and encouraging you to prepare a three day emergency supply kit to weather the storm at home.

When the storm arrives and the number of outages begins to climb, we will dispatch line crews as soon as it's safe to do so. The safety of our members and employees is our top priority here, so if conditions are too dangerous, line crews will only respond to electrical emergencies, such as live wires down or other potentially dangerous situations that may occur when the storm is occurring.

While the storm picks up outside, activity is also picking up inside our Plymouth headquarters building. In our control center, dispatchers are logging outage reports and coordinating with town emergency services to get line crews to emergency calls. In our call center, our member solutions representatives are fielding hundreds of calls an hour from members reporting their outages.

Once the storm passes, and/or it's safe to do so, the restoration effort begins. The first step in restoring power is an assessment of the damage on the electric system. A major storm can bring down trees and limbs on power lines in hundreds of locations around our service territory.

After the October 30 storm last year, for instance ... which was our worst on record, by the way, with about 55,000 members out of power ... we had lines reported down in more than 600 locations. With that much damage to contend with, it's really important that we have a plan to restore power in the quickest, most efficient way possible.

Depending on the severity and the impact on the electric system, we may need upwards of 24 to 48 hours of damage assessment time. Again, this damage assessment is the most critical component of the entire restoration effort. It allows us to plan for the proper resources to be dispatched for the safest, most efficient, and timeliest restoration.

Without a proper assessment, the restoration of power can take longer than anticipated, and longer than it should. It may be frustrating, but during this time, we're usually unable to provide estimated restoration times for specific areas.

Outside of major storms that have significant impact on the electric system, we are often able to provide more timely restoration estimates, but the job is much more difficult and time consuming when damage is widespread.

As a general rule, we attempt to restore power first to outages that are affecting the largest number of members. That means we start at our 44 substations, each one of which serves thousands of members. If there's a problem with the high voltage transmission lines that deliver power to those substations, we will help the line owner restore power when possible. At the same time, our line crews will be patrolling and repairing the main lines and circuits that serve large numbers of members on our distribution system.

Next, crews will restore power to the smaller tap lines that serve neighborhoods or smaller roads. Finally, crews will spend the remainder of the restoration repairing damage to the service lines that serve individual homes. Within 24 to 48 hours of a major storm passing, we will make every effort to provide our first estimated restoration times by town.

We make these estimates available at least twice a day to our members and the public on our website, on social media, and via traditional media like newspapers, radio, and TV. We do our very best to meet these restoration times, but some estimates are subject to change because of unexpected delays or road closures that prevent our crews from accessing certain areas.

Well into the storm, by the third or fourth day or so, our crews have usually restored the largest outages and are working on the dozens of smaller outages affecting fewer and fewer numbers of members. It's not unusual at this time to see the number of members restored slow down a bit, as crews work outages that are affecting smaller and smaller numbers of members.

Depending on the location, a downed tree could knock out power to a handful of members or several thousand. Regardless, as an example, a broken pole can take as much as eight to 12 hours to replace, whether it's serving one member or a thousand. During the October storm this past fall, for instance, our line crews replaced nearly 200 broken poles.

The final days of a major power restoration effort are spent repairing damage to the service lines that serve individual homes and businesses. At this stage, it's important that you call us if you're still without power. The power to your town or neighborhood may have been restored, but there might be damage on the line that runs from the street to your house. If your neighbors have power but you don't, please call our outage reporting number to make sure we're aware of your outage.

Again, you can find that outage reporting number on our website. I'll read it to you now in case. It's 1-800-343-6432.

There's no doubt that restoring power after a major storm is a logistical challenge, but it's being made easier by investments that we've made in technology and right of way clearing. On the technology front, we're installing more and more protective and sectionalizing devices that can isolate outages to smaller sections of line.

We've also taken steps to provide redundant feeds to the majority of our substations, as well as the ability in some locations to switch main feeders and circuits. From our control center in Plymouth, a co-op employee can route power to substations from several different directions, which allows us to keep those substations energized when transmission lines go down.

Our most effective weapon in the fight against power outages is right of way clearing. Our right of way, for people who are unfamiliar, is the property where our power lines are located, along the road and through the woods, or along other land. In a typical power line right of way, we have the authority to cut trees and vegetation within 15 feet of either side of the power line.

In the past 10 years, we've made, and continue to make significant investments in right of way clearing and maintenance. Here are some numbers for you. In 2017 alone, we cleared 530 miles of line, and removed over 10,000 danger trees. Those are the trees that are located outside the right of way, but can be hazardous to the electric system.

Throughout the entire year, there are as many as 43 crews clearing co-op rights of way. This investment has paid off for our members. Excluding major storms, the number and duration of power outages has steadily come down over the past 10 years.

No matter how well we clear rights of way and address hazard trees outside the right away, we can't clear the entire forest, nor do I think you would want us to. Given this fact, it's important that you still prepare for extended outages before they happen. A comprehensive list of preparations is available on our website, but at a minimum, we recommend that you gather enough food, water, and supplies to last three days.

Depending on the time of year that outages occur, you may decide that it's too cold to stay at home. We recommend that you have a plan for this possibility. You could stay with friends or family, for instance, or seek emergency shelters near you. Remember that you call 211 for a list of shelter locations in New Hampshire.

After water, food, and warmth, the most important commodity during a power outage is information. That's where SmartHub can help. SmartHub is the account management tool you can use to pay your bill online and view your hourly electric use, but it's also your main source of information about power outages.

If you haven't already created a SmartHub account, you can do so anytime by clicking the secure login link at the top of our website homepage at [www.nhec.com](http://www.nhec.com). Once you've enrolled, you can report an outage online and see updates on the outage affecting you.

There are three easy ways to report your outage. You can call our outage reporting line at 1-800-343-6432. This number is staffed 24 hours a day. You can also report your outage via the SmartHub mobile app or by logging into your SmartHub account at our website.

Another piece of advice during a storm, during the preparation phase, it's a good idea to charge up your mobile device when you know a storm is coming so you can see the latest outage updates, as well as updates from state emergency management officials. This will help you decide if you hunker down at home or make plans to leave.

In closing, we hope this has given you a better idea of what's happening when the power goes out, and what we're doing to prevent outages, as well as the resources available that will keep you well informed and a little more comfortable.

I see we do have some callers with questions tonight, as we expected. I'm joined tonight by Jim Bakas, our Vice President of Operations and Engineering, who's standing by to answer your questions. Allison, let's get right to them.

Allison: Absolutely. Jim is our first live caller of the evening. Jim, go ahead, sir. You are live. Please tell us where you're from, and what your question is.

Jim: Hi, yeah. I'm from Wilmot, New Hampshire. Question is, when we have power outages ... which we just had one this morning, but the way ... do we get prorated for the time the power's out? Second part of that question ... just out of curiosity, it seems like every time we have one of these Town Hall Meetings, you guys raise the rates. Are you guys intending to raise the rates again?

Jim Bakas: Well, the answer to your first question ... there is no prorating on that issue. Regarding rates, I think we had a discussion about that last time, but Steve Kaminski can chime in on that one.

Steve Kaminski: Thanks for the question about rates. Generally, I do note that when the power is not flowing to you because of an outage, your meter isn't turning. To that extent, it's kind of like automatic prorating, not the way you want to have it, but there is reduction in what you'll get charged.

I don't know if I introduced myself or not, Steve Kaminski from the Power Supply Department here at the co-op. As far as rate changes, we will be seeing our usual May 1 rate change. We change rates for power supply costs on May 1 and November 1 each year. We expect we'll be doing that.

It's been a very tough winter, as far as the power supply system is concerned, the bulk power supply system in New England, in terms of costs of generation. If you remember, the big cold spell that we had towards the end of December and into January caused a very high cost for a long duration. Those costs are flowing through to our wholesale bills right now. Those will be factored into the rate change that we'll have to do in May.

We don't expect to see as much as a drop from winter to summer as we normally would see, but at this point, it doesn't look like there's gonna be a rise at that point in time.

Allison: Excellent. Thank you so much, and thank you for that question, Jim.

We're going to go to Kimberly live here in a moment, but want to remind you, press zero on the keypad on your phone to get in line with your question, like Jim did. Also, we had a bunch of people press zero to provide us their email address. We are ready for more people now, cleared that queue.

Again, those email addresses, we send out an e-newsletter with important information about promotional programs, rebates, and incentives. Again, press seven for that, and zero to get in line with your question.

With that, we have Kimberly up live next. Kimberly, go ahead. You are live. Tell us where you're from and what your question is.

Kimberly: Hi, I'm Kimberly. I'm from Center Sandwich. I'm just wondering, when the lights go out, sometimes the telephones go out too. How are we supposed to get in touch with you if we can't get through on phone or internet?

Jim Bakas: The only other way would be, Kimberly, if you had a cell phone right now. I assume that your phone service is through the cable company and not the telephone. That would be your only option, at least locally at the house, it would be.

Allison: All right, excellent. Thank you so much, Kimberly. Now we have Matthew up live next. Matthew, go ahead sir. You are live. Tell us where you're from and what your question is.

Matthew: Moultonborough, New Hampshire. I have dead trees in the front of my property, and I'm wondering if you guys would be willing to take them down so that I didn't have to.

Jim Bakas: First of all, we'll look at it. You can leave your information behind. Certainly, if there's some impairment to the line, then more than likely, we take them down. We've done a lot of work in Moultonborough, so leave your information, and we'll swing by and look at it.

Allison: Excellent. Thank you so much, Matthew. Matthew, what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna send you back to the listening audience, and then I want you to press seven and talk to our staff member there. Give him your information, and he can write all of that down that way.

Thank you so much, Matthew. We've got Steve up live next. Steve, go ahead. Tell us where you're from and what your question is.

Steve: The service address is in Ossipee, just down the street from your district office there. Back in the end of the year, I think it was, there was a storm and the power went out. I thought your system was pretty good. I saw on the web that there was outage.

I wasn't at the property at the time. I was en route to it. When I arrived, the power was out. I signed up to have the notify when it restored, and I went off for a little bit. This was after 10 o'clock at night on a Saturday night. I actually went down into the center of town, where it turns out one of your competitors is the power supplier.

They had just turned on that part of town. I wasn't too concerned. Then I waited a little bit, and I didn't hear anything. I thought I'll just drive back to a different property in the Southern part of state.

After about 20 minutes, I got a text saying, "Hey, your power's back on." I said, "Hey, this is great. This is a great system." I turned around, went back to the house, but the power wasn't on, and none of my neighbors' was on either. It wasn't like it was just me. It was a big section still that was out.

I don't know who else you notified, but it seems like the system needs a little tuning.

Jim Bakas: You're correct. We actually had a few issues on that last storm with our system. It's called a step restoration, and what that simply is, is on a main line, we bring sections of line on. We turn the power on, and we continue down the line. We

have a system that does automatic call backs. There was a little bug in that, so some people were actually getting calls saying that their power was on, but it wasn't.

The step restoration portion has been addressed already in the outage management system, and we're still working on the callback portion of that. In the interim, we would shut that off now, on certain feeders so people are not getting wrong information, and you could still check the website for information.

Allison: Excellent. Thank you so much, and thank you, Steve. Quick reminder, you can press seven to sign up for that e-newsletter. You don't want to miss out on that, lots of important information that way. Press zero to get in line with your question.

I'm going to go with a question now that came in earlier today. It goes like this ... During a major outage, why can't I have an estimate for restoration ASAP?

Jim Bakas: Well, I think if you were able to at least hear Seth earlier, he explained a lot of that. We typically try to do an assessment. In a lot of these storms, especially the last one ... which everyone remembers the largest one we had ... it did take upwards of two days in some areas just to physically get into the area, there was so much tree damage and wires down.

What happens a lot of times is, the utilities ... not just us, but all utilities ... end up doing and have to do a lot of that tree work. It just takes time to get in. That's why an estimate's not available.

Allison: All right, excellent. Thanks so much. We're going back to our live audience now. Judy, go ahead. You're live. Please tell us where you're from, and what your question is.

Judy: I just gave the operator my information. I'll do it again. It's Judy, and I'm from [Solonton 00:26:07]. I'd like to know if there are any homes in this area that have underground wiring, or is it all up on telephone poles? That's the first question. The second is, what area do you service?

Jim Bakas: Yeah, Judy, there is some underground, direct buried cable and pipe and wire in the town of Thornton. Could you help me with the second part of the question?

Speaker 10: What areas do we service?

Jim Bakas: Oh, service areas. We cover about a third of the territory, a third of the state. The brunt of our system, as far as the membership goes, is really the central part of the state. That would include the Lakes region, Plymouth, even up in Thornton ... that area, the ski areas ... as far down as Raymond, and as far north of Colebrook, and west of the Vermont border, over near [inaudible 00:27:10].

Allison: All right, excellent. Thank you so much for that question, Judy. We're moving right along to Jim now. Jim, go ahead. You're live, sir. Tell us where you're from and what your question is.

Jim: Hi. It's Jim again from Wilmot with a followup. Regarding your tree clearance, you stated that you clear 15 feet from the power lines, but is that measured at the ground level, or is it measured up at the line level? The reason I ask is because along Campground Road in Wilmot, between 4A and 11, there's a large number of trees that actually overhang almost onto those lines.

They're leaning at such an angle where it's not gonna take much to bring them down. Is there any intent to clear those, if you're even aware of them?

Jim Bakas: Yeah, I'm sure we are aware of them, Jim. Typically, that 15 foot either side of the line of the 30 foot right of way, even when you're driving through, it's not clear cut. There are healthy trees in there that are gonna not have any impairment to the line whatsoever.

Then we typically try to cut ground to sky, but if there's a canopy that's high enough, and the trees are healthy, then we won't touch them. Even in an ice storm, or a heavy wet snow, they'll bend down, but they'll miss the line.

We will, though, have an arborist inspect that particular route. We do have crews. I know we have three crews down there now, in that whole area. We'll check on that. As long as you can leave ... I think you left your address already, but if you haven't, please do so.

Allison: Yep, go ahead and press seven, Jim, if you need to leave us your address. Thank you so much, sir.

All right, another question that came in earlier today goes like this ... What takes so long to do an assessment? Who'd like to weigh in on that one?

Jim Bakas: Yep, sure. I'll weigh in on that. It all depends on really what the storm damage might be. If we take the October storm ... because that was our biggest, and it's our latest storm, and most people were impacted by it, with 65% of the membership out ... that particular storm, we were still assessing, in some areas, into two and a half to three days.

You have significant damage, tree damage, across the whole service territory. Again, it depends on the storm, it depends on if the whole service territory is impacted versus one region of the service territory, then that would typically bring it up.

Blocked roads where there's wires down ... a lot of times there's no wires down, but there's trees down ... they take a long time to clean out. Like I've mentioned earlier in the phone call, the utilities typically bear the brunt with their tree

crews on clearing roads out. The state does a good job at it, but in most instances like this last storm, an amazing amount of trees came down, so it just takes time.

Allison: All right, excellent. Thank you so much, sir. Then one more question here, one we get commonly. If trees cause the majority of outages, what is NHEC doing to maintain the lines so the outages are less frequent?

Jim Bakas: We, over the last close to 10 years now, have invested many millions of dollars a year in right of way clearing. You're looking at clearing upwards of 500 miles of line every year now, along with thousands of danger trees outside of the line. It's a lot of work. The thing is, we're trying to get the main lines, those are the main circuits that feed the majority of the members that we have to keep going, whether there's storms or not, 'cause that's where the power comes from.

We've got those down to about a five to a seven year cycle, and that's good. Because of that investment that the members have allowed us to do, and the board of directors, that has increased reliability dramatically. Again, the main lines need to stay on. If they come down, they need to be put back up fast.

Whether people believe it or not, the right of way is not necessarily just for keeping the lines up. It's also to keep the linemen safe when they restore power. When they're going down there, and they've got to put that line back up or build new line, they're not tripping and falling all over the place. It actually makes for a faster restoration. Hopefully that helps.

Allison: Absolutely. Thank you so much. With that, we have just about reached the end of our allotted time. I would like to turn this back to you gentlemen for some closing remarks. Seth, why don't we start with you.

Seth Wheeler: All right, Allison, thank you. Thank everybody for hanging in there with us. I hope you learned something tonight about what we're up against, and what you can expect when the lines start coming down. It is a challenging situation.

We want to close tonight with just a quick reminder of the three easy ways you can report an outage. By phone, you call our outage reporting line, which is always staffed, 24/7, 365 days a year at 1-800-343-6432. You can also report your outage via the SmartHub mobile app, which you can download on any of your mobile devices, or by logging into your SmartHub account at our website, at [www.nhec.com](http://www.nhec.com).

With that, we want to thank you one more time for joining us tonight, and good night.