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LESSON LEARNED

Utility Restoration and Recovery Operations: Including Emergency Response Partners in Exercises

SUMMARY

Utility companies should consider including other utilities, mutual aid organizations, and state and local emergency management agencies in their emergency readiness drills. This can help promote coordination between utilities and emergency response partners during energy restoration and recovery operations.

DESCRIPTION

On December 11 and 12, 2008, a damaging ice storm swept across the southern half of New Hampshire. Mixed precipitation and a large amount of ice caused severe power outages in 211 of the state's 256 localities. More than 400,000 customers lost electricity for 2 weeks or more. Uprooted trees and fallen limbs knocked down power lines and blocked access to more than 350 segments of state and local roads. As a result, New Hampshire's four major electric providers, Public Service of New Hampshire, Unitil Energy Systems, National Grid, and the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, suffered from high levels of outages and widespread damage to their distribution systems.

Electric providers' response capabilities had varying levels of compatibility with the response efforts of other utilities and government agencies. Some utilities and local governments used the incident command system (ICS) to guide their response operations. However, those that did not use ICS were unfamiliar with the emergency response plans of supporting entities. This hampered coordination efforts and prolonged restoration and recovery activities.

The *After Action Review: December '08 Ice Storm Final Report* recommends that all electric utilities include relevant support organizations in their emergency readiness drills. This can facilitate interactions between municipalities and utilities while also improving communication and coordination. The report also suggests that drills be held on a bi-annual basis to ensure that the utilities and supporting agencies continue to collaborate and possess knowledge of the current state of each other's capabilities and plans.

Utility companies should consider including other utilities, mutual aid organizations, and state and local emergency management agencies in their emergency readiness drills. This can help promote coordination between utilities and emergency response partners during energy restoration and recovery operations.

CITATION

New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission. *After Action Review: December '08 Ice Storm Final Report*. Dec 2009.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=41246>

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