

NEWS



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Winter Storm Pummels Western Kansas Electric Systems

Hays, KS—Dec 31—A massive winter ice storm coupled with high winds is causing a massive amount of damage to Sunflower Electric and the six rural electric cooperatives it serves in 34 western Kansas counties.

At 3:00 p.m. estimates indicate more than 20,000 customers are currently without power. More than 5,000 poles and 21 steel towers have been damaged or destroyed with losses mounting hourly.

The distribution cooperatives that own Sunflower continue to work tirelessly to identify the damages to their systems and are working around the clock to restore service to their customers.

The same effort is underway by Sunflower's employees in the system control, transmission, substation, and communications departments. Restoration efforts continue to be hampered, however, by freezing temperatures and persistent winds across the region.

"In all my years, I have never seen such devastation to our utility systems," said Earl Watkins, Sunflower's President and Chief Executive Officer. "I am humbled by the heroic efforts of the people working to restore service to our Member's customers and to the Sunflower system. They are all doing everything humanly possible to get the power back on as quickly as possible."

It is estimated the total loss from the storm damage will exceed \$10 million, and it could be seven to ten days before service is restored to all customers across the system.

In addition to the local cooperative workforce, a large contingent of support is arriving in western Kansas to assist in the repair efforts. Rural electric cooperatives from across the region and private contractors are all marshalling their assets to provide aid to each distribution cooperative and to Sunflower.

Besides the destruction on the distribution and transmission systems, Sunflower's Holcomb plant was damaged when it was tripped off line as a result of the sudden loss of load from high voltage lines which were knocked down by the storm. The event resulted in a large piece of slag falling inside

the boiler which damaged at least one tube. While the damage from the slag fall can be delayed for future repair, it is a problem that must be corrected in the near future.

Media Contact

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About Sunflower—

Sunflower Electric Power Corporation is a regional wholesale power supplier that owns and operates a 595 MW system of gas and coal-based generating plants and a 1,200-mile transmission system for the needs of its six member cooperatives who serve 118,000 people spread throughout a 21,000 square mile area in western Kansas. Sunflower also provides power to regional utilities in western Kansas and in ten states. Visit Sunflower's website at <http://www.sunflower.net>

Sunflower's member cooperatives include Lane-Scott Electric Cooperative, Dighton, Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Ulysses, Prairie Land Electric Cooperative, Norton, Victory Electric Cooperative Association, Dodge City, Western Cooperative Electric Association, WaKeeney, and Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Scott City, Kansas.