



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



Storm Work Safety Message

The strength and magnitude of a storm should determine our methods to address it. But long before a significant event occurs, a plan to restore power safely should be made by the utility.

At least once a year, management should conduct a planning session to ensure that the details – such as logistics for the materials and personnel involved – are taken care of. If mutual aid may be required, contracts and standby agreements with local hotels or work camp facilities should be made. Agreements should also be made with materials suppliers. Without a supply chain plan, restoration efforts are often extended beyond when customers expect their power to be restored. Additionally, staging areas, meals, laundry and all other considerations for mutual assistance teams should be planned in advance.

Safety for the Storm Team

The safety of all storm team employees should drive the organization and management of the restoration effort. There will be many opportunities for injury during restoration. Tree removal and the felling of trees; improperly connected, temporary customer-owned generation (e.g., solar panels, wind generators, battery storage units); traffic; and curiosity seekers represent challenges to the provision of a safe working environment. Job briefings are a primary tool to help identify all hazards on a job site and select the appropriate safe work procedures. Don't forget the special considerations for each job and the control of all energy, not just electrical.

Work hours should be limited to prevent exhaustion. The longer the storm work continues, the more likely it is that an incident could occur. OSHA now requires crews to work either as one team with complex lockout/tagout procedures on the same circuit or as if they are the only ones on the circuit. The work is always hazardous, but it becomes dangerous when rules and regulations are not followed.

Lastly, many accidents have occurred on the drive home after the storm restoration work is complete. A proper rest period should be given to all personnel before they attempt a long drive.