

## **Louisiana's Electric Co-ops Make Progress in Massive Power Restoration Effort; Long Road Ahead to Full Recovery**

### **For Immediate Release**

**BATON ROUGE (August 29, 2020)** – Some Louisiana electric cooperatives are reporting progress in their efforts to restore power in the wake of Hurricane Laura. But the damage to some co-op systems in southwest Louisiana is so severe that full recovery will be extended, even with the addition of hundreds of lineworkers.

As of Saturday, August 29, 68,000 electric co-op consumers are without electricity, down from a high of over 100,000 on Thursday. Laura's fierce winds completely destroyed some co-ops' electric systems, toppling hundreds of poles and damaging substations and other equipment that must be repaired or replaced.

Widespread flooding is complicating power restoration efforts along the southwestern Louisiana coast. Co-ops serving coastal communities must wait for water to recede before assessing the damage and beginning power restoration efforts. Cooperatives are working with officials to obtain the services of black hawk helicopters to assess the damages on the coast.

"Hurricane Laura left catastrophic damage in its wake," said Jeff Arnold, CEO of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives (ALEC). "In response, we've launched a massive storm recovery and power restoration effort, assisted by hundreds of personnel from other states. Even so, a full recovery could be weeks away."

"Our cooperative workforce is dedicated to restoring electricity as safely and quickly as possible," Arnold said. "At the hardest hit co-ops, some employees are supporting this effort even though they have significant damage to their homes or have lost their homes altogether. I am proud of the response our crews are making to support their members."

As of Saturday morning, ALEC had secured mutual aid from crews from Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Illinois, Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri and Florida, with additional assistance expected in the coming days.

ALEC continues to urge consumer-members to put safety first and take the following steps:

- Do not clear any right-of-way to personal property until electric cooperatives clears right of way for you. There are numerous life-threatening hazards as well as potential to do more damage to our system. Please wait until your cooperative is available to clear a path for you.
- Stay away from downed wires. Always assume they are energized. Contact the co-op to report downed wires or an outage.
- Avoid flooded areas. Flooding is a major threat from Hurricane Laura. Flash flooding can occur suddenly due to intense rainfall. Long-term flooding along rivers and streams can persist for days following a storm. When approaching water on a roadway, remember: Don't Drown. Turn Around.
- Avoid crews working in the street. This will keep you and the crews safe and allow them to work on restoring your power.

- If you plan to use a portable generator, follow the manufacturer's instructions and use only when necessary. Don't overload it and turn it off at night when you're asleep or if you leave your home.
- To avoid the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, place portable generators outside in a well-ventilated area, more than 20 feet away from your home, doors and windows. Never run a generator inside, not even in your garage. Do not connect the generator directly into your home's main fuse box or circuit panel.
- Protect food and refrigerated medicine with ice in an insulated cooler. If you are without power for more than two hours, refrigerated foods should be placed in a cooler. Foods will stay frozen for 36 to 48 hours in a fully loaded freezer if the door remains closed, and a half-full freezer will generally keep frozen foods for up to 24 hours. Check [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) to learn more about when to throw out or keep food after a power outage.
- Turn off power to flood-prone basement appliances if it is safe to do so. However, if you have an electric sump pump, you should not turn off the power in your basement.
- Tune in to local news broadcasts for the latest emergency information.

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