

Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative Launches Massive Power Restoration Effort in the Wake of Hurricane Ida

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For Immediate Release

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FRANKLINTON, La. (August 31, 2021) – Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative (WSTE) has launched a major power restoration effort to begin rebuilding its system, which sustained heavy damage from Hurricane Ida.

As of noon today, 43,191 consumer-members are without power. WSTE will work as quickly and safely as possible to bring members back online. Full power restoration is expected to take weeks to complete.

“We have assembled a force of 340 line workers and contractors from across the nation to support what will be the second largest power restoration efforts in our history,” said Charles Hill, CEO. “As we begin this historic rebuilding process, a systematic approach designed to get the most assets and members back up in the least amount of time is used. We thank our members for their continued patience.”

Although a full damage assessment is still underway, WSTE estimates that Hurricane Ida snapped 350 poles and damaged or brought down more than 5,100 miles of line. Crews are having to cut their way through fallen trees and remove other debris to reach their substations and infrastructure. Some of the most severely affected communities include Savannah Branch, Goodbee, Barkers Corner and Husser. Restoration times could be particularly prolonged in these areas.

Contractors and crews began arriving yesterday to support WSTE from New York, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas and Mississippi. Co-op mutual aid crews have been secured from electric cooperatives from Texas, including CoServ, Jackson Electric Cooperative, Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative, United Cooperative Services, Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative, Mid-South Synergy, and Rusk County Electric Cooperative.

We are here for you. Contact us at 1-866-672-9773 to report outages or use your free SmartHub app.

WSTE continues to urge all members to put safety first:

- 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 Ida. Flash flooding can occur suddenly due to intense rainfall. Long-term flooding along rivers, bayous 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.
- Tune in to local news broadcasts for the latest weather and emergency information.

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