
CenterPoint Energy responds to frequently asked questions

Houston – Sept. 19, 2008 – CenterPoint Energy responds to the questions customers are asking.

When will you restore my power?

We are working in our entire 5,000-square-mile service territory at the same time. Within our service territory, we're divided into 13 service areas. Each area is being worked on simultaneously, but not every area experienced the same level of damage to our infrastructure. As power is restored in each individual service area, those crews move on to reinforce the effort of our other linemen in the more heavily affected areas.

An estimated restoration timeline has been published on our website and given out to the media for distribution to the public. We will provide regular updates to this document as progress is made.

Why do sections of my neighborhood have power and I don't? Why didn't they just finish the job and repair service to my neighborhood while they were here?

We recently restored power to the foundation of our electric infrastructure, the transmission lines and substations, and completed our cut and clear process on the major power lines serving neighborhoods and businesses. We also completed our field assessment of damages to our circuits and restored power to most of our priority customers.

Through our restoration efforts, we've learned that the tree damage is more significant than the initial foot patrol and aerial surveys indicated. The next step is to combine the efforts of the 4,000 tree trimmers and 4,000 linemen together to sweep entire neighborhoods.

Sweep armies made up of tree trimmers and linemen are targeting areas making repairs that will restore power to the greatest number of customers. When trees are removed from the lines, the company can get power on for most remaining customers on circuits as well as customers behind line fuses.

During a normal restoration process, circuits (major neighborhood power lines) - the backbone of the company's system that restores power to 1,000 customers or more - are restored first using the cut and clear process, which identifies problems that cause power outages on a circuit or power line and reroutes power around the problem areas.

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Problems include a downed tree, power line or broken pole. Determining where the power is out indicates where additional repairs need to be made. Energizing line fuses, which typically restores service to 100 or more customers, is the next step.

Under this process, if your neighbor has power but you do not, there may be a problem on your individual service drop, which will require more time to fix. We will return to the area to make these repairs as the restoration efforts progress.

Crews were working on my street for days and now they've left when power was almost restored. Why did they leave before finishing the job?

We continue to work in our entire 5,000-square-mile service territory at the same time. The company has moved into the next stage of its Emergency Operating Plan restoration process. Sweep armies made up of tree trimmers and linemen are targeting areas making repairs that will restore power to the greatest number of customers. We continue to work around the clock in all areas including areas that have few customers still without power. Some of our circuits (major power lines) are miles long, and you may never see a service truck on your street or in your immediate area because the power outage may be a result of a problem further down the power line.

I had power restored to my house for a few hours and now it's out again. Why did this happen and will I now be placed toward the bottom of the restoration list?

Already weakened trees and branches continue to snap and fall on power lines, creating new outages where old ones were just repaired. There also may be more damage on the line. Where a customer falls on the restoration list is difficult to tell without understanding the specifics of the problem. After completing repairs of damages affecting larger numbers of customers, crews will return to make additional repairs.

How can my apartment complex have partial power?

If your apartment complex has partial power, it could be that there is inside equipment damage or our utility service line may be damaged. CenterPoint Energy will check out the problem. A licensed electrician is also qualified to investigate this situation and determine the source of the problem.

Why don't I see any crews working in my area?

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Do you have enough linemen to restore our power?

In addition to our 3,000 utility workers, we also have 8,000 linemen and tree trimmers from 31 states and Canada working alongside our crews restoring power. All are working around the clock until all service is restored.

Why is it taking so long to restore power?

In a 5,000-square-mile area centered around Houston, CenterPoint has about 50,000 miles of power lines —enough to wrap around the earth twice. That is a lot of infrastructure that is susceptible to outside forces, such as hurricane force winds and downed trees.

Days before Hurricane Ike arrived, CenterPoint Energy urged customers to be prepared to be without power for several weeks and possibly longer depending on the severity of the damage. With Hurricane Ike's 110-mile-per-hour winds pounding buildings, trees and our electric infrastructure for 12 hours, power outages were inevitable. Nearly 93 percent, or 2.15 million customers, lost power. To keep it in perspective, it took us sixteen days to restore power to three fourths of customers after Hurricane Alicia in 1983. Prior to Hurricane Ike, Alicia had been the largest outage restoration effort in the company's 130-plus year history.

Are you restoring power to particular neighborhoods before others based on income level, ethnicity or influence?

No. In addition to restoring power to key facilities vital to safety, health and welfare, such as hospitals, water treatment plants and public service facilities, we are also focused on restoring power to the greatest number of customers in the least amount of time across our territory regardless of geographic location.

What resources are available to customers who are elderly, have infants or other special needs and remain without power?

There are many resources available to help, such as Red Cross, United Way, etc.

Are there special contacts or priorities for businesses that require power to exist?

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The company's first priority is addressing downed power lines and restoring service to key facilities vital to safety, health and welfare, such as hospitals, water treatment plants and public service facilities.

Would underground power lines be better, especially in areas prone to hurricanes? Are you looking at that for future installations?

Newer developments as well as downtown Houston, the Texas Medical Center and the Galleria are served with underground power lines. While underground lines are protected from falling trees and wind-blown debris, faults or operational problems are harder to detect. Also, underground lines are vulnerable to flooding which can also cause lengthy outages.

Why do we see crews standing around, appearing not to be doing any work?

There could be several reasons; the most likely centers around safety. With linemen and tree trimmers working simultaneously on individual power lines, crews need to wait for safe clearance from CenterPoint Energy dispatchers to energize power lines. Another possibility relates to materials and resources. Though crews carry the materials needed for the job, once they begin working the job, there might be special needs that arise requiring additional resources (poles, transformers, etc.) and our crews must wait until those materials arrive.

What are the steps customers can take to help in the restoration efforts?

While crews continue to work around-the-clock to restore power, there are steps customers can take to help get their home ready to receive electric service and stay safe.

- **Protect your sensitive equipment and air conditioning units**
Before power is restored, unplug all sensitive equipment, such as computers and plasma screen televisions, and turn off your air conditioner. When power is restored to a large number of customers at once, large appliances can cause a short-term power surge which may damage electrical appliances. Leave one light on. Once electric service is restored, plug in small appliances, then large appliances and finally turn on your air conditioning.
- **Inspect your electric meter**
CenterPoint Energy will make repairs to the electric delivery system up to the point where it connects to a home or business. However, the customer is responsible for

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repairs if there is damage to the meter box or weatherhead – the point where the line enters the home through a pipe. If the meter box or weatherhead is damaged, our crews will not be able to re-establish service. If in doubt, homeowners should contact a licensed electrician to make an inspection and any necessary repairs.

- **Stay Safe**

Stay away from downed or low-hanging power lines and treat them as if they're energized. Do not run generators in homes or in garages. Place portable generators in a well-ventilated area. Gasoline-powered generators produce carbon monoxide and the fumes can be deadly.

- **Call before you dig**

Digging into buried utility lines can cause serious injury or death. Before performing digging or reinstalling fences during clean-up, customers need to request that underground utility lines are marked. For your safety, you are required by law to call 811. This service will connect you with the state one-call center, which will alert participating utility companies such as electric, gas, cable and phone about the planned digging so they can mark the appropriate location of their underground lines if necessary. Please be prepared for a longer than usual wait time during the next few weeks, and do not dig until the lines have been marked.

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