

RELEASED

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Damage assessment streamlines restoration process

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's restoration efforts have been nonstop since before Hurricane Rita's landfall. Saturday and Sunday, Inspectors, Line Technicians, Operations Supervisors and Right-of-Way Foremen have been riding the lines, removing what debris they can and noting all the damage they see.

Each night, Cloy Baxley, the Cooperative's Staking Supervisor, and Inspector Darryl Bookman have poured through vast amounts of information. By studying these reports, they have compiled a list of the materials needed to repair the system and the type of crews needed to complete these jobs.

"Overall, we're probably three-quarters of the way done with our preliminary assessments," Baxley said late Sunday night. "In the Coldspring branch's service area, we know what we need to fix. As soon as Entergy restores transmission service, the lights will come on for a lot of people.

"In the Livingston and Woodville areas, we're about halfway through assessing the damage."

Baxley and Bookman spent part of Sunday night reviewing damage reports with CEO Kyle Kuntz, Chief Operations Officer David Babcock, Branch Manager Charlie Palmer and Engineer Bernard Henderson in order to determine the most efficient way to turn the power back on. Crew assignments were made at this meeting with the understanding that Cooperative employees will lead these out-of-town workers to the appropriate areas.

This is only the beginning of weeks of hard work.

"For the past few days, our crews were looking at our main lines, substations and feeders," Baxley said. "As the contractor crews begin working, they'll start following the taps and will eventually get to every meter.

"Although a lot of the preliminary reports were very detailed, there are things you won't notice until you really start working a line. By doing damage assessments each night, we're making sure we don't miss a member."

At 6 a.m., more than 1,000 electric utility workers from across the nation began lining up to receive their work orders, thus shifting Sam Houston EC's restoration process into overdrive.

"As more meters get power, the less damage assessment we'll have to do," Bookman said. "However, these next few weeks are going to be busy because these crews are going to see more details as they're out working in the field."

The contractors will meet at designated staging grounds in Woodville, Livingston and Coldspring each day until the restoration process is complete. By burning the midnight oil, Baxley and Bookman ensure that the right people and the right parts get to the right place, thus helping to streamline one of the biggest jobs in Sam Houston EC's 66 year history.



Cloy Baxley, left and Darryl Bookman review Sunday's damage assessment report sheet in the Cooperative's Line Technicians' meeting room