

Progress Since Sandy

By **JIM TORGERSON**

Every incident that impacts the electric power industry's ability to serve our customers is an opportunity to learn and improve. In this regard, Superstorm Sandy was an effective teacher.

Since the 2012 storm, the industry has invested tremendous time, resources, and commitment to streamlining our emergency response processes and to strengthening the reliability and resiliency of the energy grid. By applying what we learned from Sandy, we continue to enhance the industry's response to extreme weather events.

At my own company, in Connecticut, Maine, and New York, we have invested more than \$210 million since Sandy to harden systems, increase readiness, and protect our customers from outages caused by severe weather.

While there are always new lessons to learn, last October's Hurricane Matthew demonstrated how far our industry has come. Our success can be attributed not only to identifying lessons learned, but to how the industry coordinates before, during, and after an event.

For example, in the aftermath of Sandy, Florida Power & Light (FPL) personnel assisting Consolidated Edison with restoration discovered the value of flood monitors at substations. FPL used this technique effectively during Hurricane Matthew to assess when to de-energize substations, preserve equipment, and limit the duration of the outage.

Since Superstorm Sandy, the industry has invested more than

\$175 billion to make the energy grid smarter. Investments in technology like smart meters provide greater situational awareness and allow crews to respond more efficiently.

EI member companies also have improved our mutual assistance processes by establishing the National Response Event (NRE) framework. The NRE framework supports the industry's Regional Mutual Assistance Groups (RMAGs) in the event of an incident with national implications and consolidated RMAGs in the Northeast to broaden regional response and allocation of resources.

Additionally, the new Resource Allocation Management Program for Utility Personnel (RAMP-UP) online tool supports RMAGs and their ability to manage resource allocation seamlessly during incidents. During Sandy, countless transportation issues hindered crews' ability to reach affected areas. I'm proud of how our industry and EEI subsequently engaged state emergency management and transportation agencies to develop a framework for expediting the movement of crews and heavy equipment through tolls and weigh stations in both impacted and "pass through" states. This framework expedited fleet movement during Matthew.

The industry also has sought public policy changes to improve restoration. EEI is working with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Congress to ensure electric companies can use unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for energy grid maintenance and service restoration. During Matthew, companies were able to secure

FAA waivers to fly UAS within the line of sight, aiding in damage assessments, improving situational awareness, and expediting restoration.

And, thanks to a unanimous Federal Communications Commission ruling championed by EEI, member companies now can communicate preparedness and safety messages, along with critical storm information, through automated calls and text messages to their customers. The use of this technology no longer comes with the threat of litigation and has helped companies communicate effectively with customers.

Finally, through the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC), we continue to work with the government and other critical infrastructure sectors to support restoration, share information, provide situational awareness, request resources, and align messaging.

With hurricane season on the horizon, the public can be confident that the industry is applying lessons from these and other weather events to improve the resilience of the energy grid and to allow us to better serve our customers and our communities. **EP**



JIM TORGERSON is CEO of AVANGRID Inc., a member of the ESCC, and co-chair of EEI's CEO Policy Committee on Reliability, Security, and Business Continuity.

The Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) serves as the principal liaison between the federal government and the electric power sector, with the mission of coordinating efforts to prepare for, and respond to, national-level disasters or threats to critical infrastructure. The ESCC includes electric company CEOs and trade association leaders representing all segments of the industry.

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