

CenterPoint Energy's restoration efforts continue

*Company emphasizes safety around power lines and
when using portable generators*

Next news release: 9 p.m.

Houston – Sept. 15, 2008 – Thousands of mutual assistance linemen and tree trimmers from across the country continue to arrive to enhance CenterPoint Energy's electric restoration efforts. The company estimates that by the end of the day, 3,000 scheduled linemen and tree trimmers will have arrived and received work orders. And by Wednesday, an additional 4,000 will be on the scene helping CenterPoint Energy get power back on.

These mutual assistance crews will help CenterPoint Energy make repairs identified by the company's "cut and clear" process. "When faults are identified on a line, such as a downed tree, power line or pole, we isolate the problem where the fault is and reroute power around it. This process quickly restores power to large numbers of customers. Later, crews come back to the damaged area to make all proper repairs," explained Kenny Mercado, CenterPoint Energy senior vice president of Electric Operations.

Mutual assistance crews will play a key role to work these faults. This labor-intensive process takes several hours in which to complete each work order.

Important Electric Safety Information for AFTER the Storm

As customers continue to use portable generators and begin to clean-up storm debris, it is critical that customers act safely and follow these safety tips:

- Know where power lines are and always stay at least 10 feet away. Whether you're trimming your trees or clearing debris, take note of all power lines in the area and have a plan of how to work around them.
 - Use portable generators in a well-ventilated area. **Never** run them inside, even in your garage. Gasoline-powered generators produce carbon monoxide, and the fumes can be deadly.
- ✓ **Do not** connect the portable generator to any house wiring.
- ✓ **Never** connect a portable electric generator or a motor home/RV generator directly to your home's electrical system during a power outage. Electricity could backfeed into the power lines and endanger CenterPoint Energy workers.
 - ✓ Plug appliances directly into the generator using heavy duty, properly grounded extension cords. Make sure that extension cords are not frayed or worn.

- ✓ Read all instructions carefully and follow all manufacturers' guidelines for portable generator operations and grounding.
- ✓ Limit the number of appliances you use to no more than the recommended wattage of the generator.
- ✓ Use the generator only when necessary, and don't overload it. Turn it off at night while you sleep and when you are away from home to avoid a possible fire hazard.
- ✓ If you have any doubts about how to properly use a portable electric generator, contact the manufacturer or a licensed electrician for assistance.

Natural gas safety

Be alert for the smell of natural gas. If you smell gas, leave the area immediately and tell others to leave too. Many areas are inaccessible or extremely difficult for company employees to access so it's important to leave the area and call CenterPoint Energy from a safe, remote location and to be patient.

- Do not smoke, strike a match, use a cell phone or operate anything that might cause a spark, including a flashlight or a generator.
- Do not attempt to turn natural gas valves on or off. Once safely away from the area, call 713-659-2111 or 888-876-5786 and CenterPoint Energy will send a trained service technician immediately.

How CenterPoint Energy prioritizes restoration

After performing an initial damage assessment, including aerial surveys and on the ground inspections, the company focuses on repairs that will restore power to the greatest number of customers in the shortest amount of time.

1. Repairs begin with circuits, which are the backbone of the distribution system. Repairing these main feeder lines can affect 1,000 customers or more.
2. Line fuses are repaired next. Typically 100 or more customers are served behind line fuses.
3. Transformers are the third level of the restoration process. Replacing or repairing transformers will typically restore power to 10 or fewer customers.
4. Individual drops serve single homes. These repairs are the last stage of the restoration process.

What customers can do to help

The company continues to ask customers NOT to call the company to report outages, but only to report emergencies such as downed power lines at 713-207-2222.

While crews continue to work around the clock to restore power, there are steps customers can take to get their home ready to receive electric service. 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 repairs if there is damage to the meter enclosure or weatherhead – the point where the line enters the home through a pipe. If the meter enclosure 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.

Also, while CenterPoint Energy will cut trees and limbs away from power lines and the electric service drops to the homes, homeowners are responsible for the removal of debris left by tree trimming crews who are assisting with power restoration efforts.

The company's 5,000 square-mile electric service territory suffered widespread damage as a result of 100-mile-per-hour winds, and trees and wind-blown debris on power lines. Patience will continue to be a key factor. Customers should be prepared to be without power for an extended period of time depending on the damage to the facilities that serve them.