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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **PSC Urges Caution Following Snow Storm**

***More than 93,000 still without power in eastern Kentucky; extended outages possible, but residents should prepare for power restoration***

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 20, 2009) - The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) is urging residents affected by the weekend snow storm in eastern Kentucky to exercise caution and to be prepared to go without electric power for several days.

As of 10 a.m. today, utilities under the PSC's jurisdiction were reporting a total of 93,488 customers were without power. That figure, which is down from a peak of about 107,000, does not include municipal utilities.

Kentucky Power Co. (part of the American Electric Power Co. (AEP) system) reported 69,624 customers without power in 14 counties. More than third of those – 24,124 - were in Pike County.

Jackson Energy Cooperative had 10,771 customers without power, most of them in Clay and Laurel counties. Four other utilities – Kentucky Power Co., Cumberland Valley Electric, Big Sandy Rural Electric Cooperative Corp. (RECC) and South Kentucky RECC - accounted for the remaining outages.

Kentucky Power reported that it had more than 1,200 workers engaged in restoration efforts, many of them from other companies in the AEP system.

With full restoration expected to take several days, customers should exercise caution when using portable generators or other devices intended to provide temporary power or heat.

“As we saw during the ice storm earlier this year, improper use of portable generators can have tragic consequences,” Gov. Steve Beshear said. “We had far too many deaths and hospitalizations from carbon monoxide poisoning. All of them were entirely preventable.”

The PSC is urging residents affected by the ice storm to check electric connections and meters for damage. Damaged connections or meters must be repaired before power can be restored to a home or business.

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Falling trees or branches or sagging power lines may have damaged the connections between the utility company's overhead line and a customer's electric system. The connections are usually in the form of a masthead – a conduit connected to the service line – or, in older homes, an eyebolt which holds the line in place and an insulated line leading to the meter. In some cases, the meter or meter base may also be damaged.

Once power is restored, damaged connections or meters could pose an electrical or fire hazard if not repaired or if repaired improperly.

“It is critical that damaged connections be repaired by a qualified professional and inspected before power is restored,” PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. “In past outages, fires and severe damage have been caused by damaged or improperly repaired service connections.”

Repairing a service connection or meter base is the responsibility of the individual customer.

The meter base is the square or rectangular box on which the meter itself is mounted. It belongs to the property owner. The meter itself – the circular, glass-enclosed portion that attaches to the meter base - is the property of the utility company.

Customers with damaged connections or meters should take the following steps:

- Notify the utility company that the service connection, meter base and/or meter is damaged. The utility can then make sure that the line is not energized until repairs are completed.
- In the event that only the meter itself is damaged, contact the utility to have it repaired or replaced and your service restored.
- Contact an electrician to repair the meter base or service connection. The repair work can be done prior to power being restored in an area, thus eliminating any additional delays.
- The electrician will obtain the proper meter base from the utility. Some utilities impose no charge for the meter base, but the customer will bear the installation cost.
- Have the repairs inspected by a state-certified inspector working for your local government. The electrician should be able to help arrange the inspection.
- Notify the utility when the repairs are complete and have been approved. A utility technician will install a new meter and restore the power.
- Keep all repair records and contact your property insurer.

Residents SHOULD NOT attempt to remove any branches, limbs or trees that have fallen across service connections or other utility lines. Notify the utility to arrange for the debris to be removed.

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The PSC also reminds customers using a generator for temporary electrical power to do so in a manner that insures their safety and the safety of those working to restore power. Keys to safe operation of generators include:

- To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, generators should only be operated outside in well-ventilated areas. Do not operate generators basements, garages, breezeways, near windows, doors, heating system intakes or any location where exhaust fumes could enter a building.
- Make sure a generator is properly sized for the load you will place on it. Remember that starting an electric motor, such a refrigerator compressor, requires more electricity than the amount needed to keep it running. **DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUR GENERATOR.**
- Use only three-prong, grounded extension cords, properly rated for the load, to connect appliances to generators.
- **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FEED POWER INTO YOUR HOME BY ADAPTING AN EXTENSION CORD TO CONNECT A GENERATOR TO A WALL OUTLET. THIS CAN CAUSE A FIRE.**
- **DO NOT CONNECT A GENERATOR TO INSIDE WIRING IN ANY WAY UNLESS YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IS EQUIPPED WITH A TRANSFER SWITCH THAT PREVENTS POWER FROM FLOWING BACK INTO (BACKFEEDING) THE WIRES THAT SUPPLY YOUR ELECTRICITY.**

Backfeeding poses a severe danger to workers attempting to restore electrical service. They can be severely injured or killed by power flowing back into lines which they assume are not carrying electricity. Also, if the line to your home or business becomes grounded, backfeeding can permanently damage your generator.

“Getting everybody’s power restored after a storm, and in these difficult working conditions, is going to take some time,” Armstrong said. “People need to be patient and, above all, remain safe.”

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.