



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS
The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
Homeland Security and Emergency Management
N.H. Department of Safety, John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner
33 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03305
1-800-852-3792
newsletters@hsem.nh.gov

December 2008



A N.H. National Guard vehicle on a back road in Stoddard. Many roads were impassible during the storm due to downed trees and power lines.

Photo courtesy of N.H. National Guard.

MAJOR ICE STORM CAUSES RECORD POWER OUTAGES – Winter hadn't even started when a massive ice storm struck the Northeast late on Thursday, Dec. 11, and New Hampshire received the worst of it. The storm knocked out power to 420,000 customers of the state's four electric utilities in an area stretching from the Lakes Region to the Massachusetts border. Heavy ice on power lines and on trees and branches damaged or destroyed large sections of transmission lines and other facilities, forcing the utilities to, in effect, rebuild parts of their systems in order to restore power. Public Service Company of New Hampshire, the state's largest electric utility, brought in more than one thousand tree and line crews to supplement its own fleet of 190 crews. Unitil, N.H. Electric Co-op and National Grid also called in reinforcements from out of state.

PSNH President Gary Long said the storm was three to four times the size of any situation the company had ever faced. In the first six days of the restoration effort, PSNH replaced more than 55 miles of wire, nearly 500 transformers and about 10,000 fuses. That is more fuses than the company normally goes through in several years.

People without power found various ways to cope. Some chose to tough it out in their homes without electricity, relying on wood stoves or generators. The American Red Cross and local communities opened shelters in schools and other facilities. Local police, firefighters and National Guard troops went door to door in many communities, conducting welfare checks on residents. A particular concern was carbon monoxide poisoning from improperly vented generators or heaters. There were two fatalities and at least 61 people taken to hospitals due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Gov. John H. Lynch declared a State of Emergency and requested assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA provided generators, food, water and cots, which the National Guard delivered to shelters and other critical facilities. FEMA and state emergency management staff conducted a preliminary damage assessment in all 10 counties. Governor Lynch said the state would seek a Presidential Disaster Declaration for Public Assistance, Individual Assistance and aid to small businesses affected by the storm.

As of Monday, Dec. 22, more than 10,000 customers remained without power in New Hampshire.

POWER SUPPLY PROJECTED TO MEET WINTER DEMAND – Ice storms notwithstanding, the region will have an adequate supply of electric power this winter, according the ISO New England, the regional power grid operator. ISO New England is predicting peak demand to reach just over 23,000 megawatts (MW) with normal winter weather conditions of seven degrees Fahrenheit, although a slowing economy could reduce demand. During a prolonged period of colder weather, with temperatures around one degree Fahrenheit, demand could reach 24,175 MW. The system has generating capacity of 33,750 MW within the region and additional demand-side resources of more than 1,800 MW.

The record for winter electricity demand was 22,814 MW, set on January 15, 2004. The all-time record demand was 28,130 MW, set on August 2, 2006.

MERRIMACK COUNTY ADDED TO DISASTER DECLARATION – The Federal Emergency Management Agency has added Merrimack County to its disaster declaration for Public Assistance for Hillsborough County due to flooding and flash flooding that occurred on Sept. 6 and 7. The disaster declaration for Merrimack County was initially denied because the estimated damage of about \$154,000 did not meet the minimum threshold. But Gov. John H. Lynch appealed that decision because many communities in Merrimack County had suffered repeated damage last summer from flooding and the July 24 tornado. FEMA reversed its initial denial on Dec. 5.

HURRICANE SEASON ENDS WITH LITTLE EFFECT ON REGION – The 2008 Atlantic Hurricane Season ended Nov. 30 with little impact on New England. No storms traveled this far north and the region only experienced heavy rain associated with Hurricanes Hanna and Ike. Kyle by-passed New Hampshire, but the state EOC was activated in anticipation of a possible hit and communication was established with the Canadian provinces and New England states that participate in the International Emergency Management Group. The season was a more active one farther south. There were 16 named storms, eight hurricanes and five intense hurricanes. According to hurricane researchers at Colorado State University, this was one of the most destructive seasons on record, with damage in the U.S. estimated at \$20 billion. They noted that Hurricane Ike alone caused \$8 billion in damage in the U.S., making it the fifth most destructive hurricane on record.

VERMONT YANKEE CONDUCTS FIRE DRILL – Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant’s on-site fire brigade carried out a joint drill with the Vernon, Vt., Fire Department on Dec. 2. The exercise involved a simulated fire at the plant’s bulk hydrogen storage area which supplies hydrogen used to maintain the plant’s reactor cooling water system chemistry. The objectives included use of the on-site hydrant system, transfer of incident command to the local fire chief, scene communications as well as training on the specific response in the scenario. Plant officials said the drill successfully met all training objectives.

WEBEOC TRAINING SCHEDULED – The HSEM Operations Section is offering training on the WebEOC computer program used to keep track of emergency operations. The program is used in the state Emergency Operations Center and can also be accessed by local EOCs to provide real time monitoring of state activities. Training will be conducted on Jan. 8 and Feb. 12 from 9-noon for state agency personnel and 1-4 p.m. for local emergency management personnel and other partners. So far, more than 350 people from towns and state agencies have been trained. Anyone interested in taking the training or who needs more information should contact Lorri.Sargent@hsem.nh.gov.



**Happy Holidays from
N.H. Homeland Security and Emergency Management**