

Lessons learned from December 2006 windstorm

Puget Sound Energy in July 2007 completed an extensive review of its performance prior to, during and following the record-breaking windstorm that hit the Pacific Northwest in mid-December 2006. In addition to seeking customer and employee feedback through focus groups, telephone and Web surveys, and internal debriefings, PSE hired KEMA, an 80-year-old energy consulting firm, to provide an independent, third-party, five-month analysis of the utility's pre-storm readiness and post-storm response. The KEMA analysis outlined in a July 2 report also recommended actions PSE can take now to ensure continued service reliability and improved outage response during future storms and other natural disasters.



KEMA's independent evaluation of PSE covered:

- Logistics and resources
- Planning and preparation
- Crew and management performance
- Internal and external information-management and communications
- System-readiness
- Vegetation-management

KEMA concluded that PSE:

- Employees performed well in difficult working conditions
- Acquired sufficient outside support, provided excellent logistical help and resources, and maintained a safe working environment
- Capabilities to collect, manage and disseminate information were overwhelmed by the storm's magnitude
- Processes for emergency planning and information were limited in ability to scale up to a storm of this size

KEMA recommended that PSE:

- Should improve the company's damage-assessment process
- Needs to invest in better methods for communicating specific information to customers regarding service restoration times
- Must "harden the system" (improve interagency coordination to clear blocked roads, widen rights-of-way through increased tree trimming, and continue ongoing vegetation management programs)
- Further explore the conversion of power lines from overhead to underground

PSE post-storm actions (summer 2007) include:

- Completed final repairs on all temporary repairs made earlier to damaged parts of the electric system
- Completed months of post-storm system inspections
- Inspected all 2,600 miles of PSE transmission lines to find and remove or cut back trees posing imminent threat of falling into the power lines (further transmission-corridor tree removal is anticipated)
- Intensified daily tree-trimming activities to ensure all transmission lines are clear of trees
- Joined forces with agencies and communities to improve communication/coordination
- Implementing report recommendations, including improving information process and technology
- Preparing now for upcoming storm season with a focus on public outreach in September, designated as Disaster Preparedness Month