

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SMECO Restores Power in Wake of Storm

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) has been working to restore service to customers affected by the storm that began causing outages early Tuesday morning.

“SMECO had about 1,800 customers without power last night and that number was whittled down to 450 at 11 a.m. today. Crews have been working in freezing temperatures and high winds, and we are glad to report that, as of 4:35 p.m., service was restored to all customers affected by the initial impact of the storm,” said Tom Dennison, SMECO’s government and public affairs managing director.

“Unfortunately, new outages continue to be reported as more trees and limbs fell on power lines today,” Dennison added. Hundreds of limbs and trees fell this week when sleet and ice blanketed portions of Southern Maryland. The ice fell as part of a major storm system that dumped up to two feet of snow in areas farther north. In SMECO’s service area, many trees fell on power lines, utility poles broke, and transformers were blown, causing thousands of outages.

SMECO features an outage map on its website that shows where outages occur, the number of incidents, and the number of customers without power. Dennison explained, “At about 10 a.m. on Tuesday, the outage map showed that SMECO had about 14,000 customers without power, but that number doesn’t tell the whole story. We’ve actually had more than 44,800 customers affected by power outages at some point since the storm started. As we worked to restore power, new outages would occur, so it appeared as though we weren’t making much headway.”

According to SMECO, hundreds of incidents were logged in its outage management system. An incident is something that causes an outage, such as a tree on a line, a blown transformer, an open substation feeder, or downed wire. For comparison, the derecho in 2012 caused 1,187 incidents.

SMECO crews worked with the assistance of contractors and additional crews from two sister electric co-ops to make repairs to the electric system. “The temperatures are still freezing and winds are gusting,” Dennison added. “And if more incidents occur, rest assured, our crews will respond.”

SMECO urges residents to call 1-888-440-3311 to report a downed line or a tree on a power line. Hazardous situations must be handled by professionals to prevent serious injury. Customers without power should call SMECO at 1-877-74-SMECO. Outages can also be reported using SMECO’s website (<https://smeco.coop/>). A free SMECO 24/7 mobile app and SMECO’s texting service are available at <https://smeco.coop/services/smeco-24-7>.

SMECO – The Cooperative Difference

Eighty years ago, when rural areas needed electricity, cooperatives were created. Visionary men and women helped to form the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO). SMECO now provides electric service to 160,000 customers in Charles County, St. Mary's County, southern Prince George's County, and all but the northeast portion of Calvert County.

Cooperatives are distinctly different from investor-owned utilities because co-ops are owned by their customers. Customer-members elect the men and women who serve on the Board of Directors. Customer-members share the responsibility of ownership by financing the cooperative's operations, but they also share its rewards.

Each year, SMECO's margins—revenue less expenses—are allocated to customers' capital credit accounts. SMECO uses margins as working capital for new construction and system improvements. Then, whenever the Board of Directors determines that the financial condition of the co-op warrants, members receive a refund.

As a cooperative, SMECO will always put its members first and be responsive, reliable, and resourceful—the power you can count on.

Follow SMECO on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SMECO.coop and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/somdelectric.

The SMECO 24/7 mobile app is available at www.smeco.coop/services/smeco-24-7.

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