

Winter storm showcases cooperative spirit

As Kentucky dealt with the effects of a devastating late-January ice and snow storm, four crews from three Pennsylvania cooperatives made their way to the state to assist in the power restoration effort. Indiana-based REA Energy Cooperative sent two crews, while Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative and Dubois-based United Electric

Cooperative each sent one crew to storm-ravaged areas of the state.

“This is an excellent example of cooperatives helping cooperatives,” said Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) President & CEO Frank Betley, remarking on one of the core principles of the cooperative business model.

In the case of this storm, Kentucky cooperatives had asked for four crews with specific equipment. While other PREA member cooperatives had offered help, the crews that were sent had the



requested equipment and were located closer to areas of need.

“The response from member systems was the same as it’s been for past storms: they are ready to help when and where they are needed,” added Betley. “Our member cooperatives continue to answer the call when needed. It’s great to see.”

The Pennsylvania crews were among over 1,100 cooperative employees from 14 states that participated in the restoration effort.

According to the Kentucky Association of Electric Cooperatives, close to 240,000 retail meters were without power after the Jan. 26 storm. Statewide electric cooperative damages are estimated to be over \$100 million.

NATURAL *selections*

Specialists work to solve bat problems

Bats in Pennsylvania are facing trouble from two directions, although specialists are working to alleviate both problems before they develop into crises. Bats are among the best friends that people have, as they provide insect control and are natural predators of crop-killing bugs. A single bat can consume hundreds of insects in an hour.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission’s (PGC) first annual report studying the effects of wind generation on animals has raised some concerns about potential negative effect of wind turbines on bats, although it’s too early for final conclusions. With only one year of data from one site, PGC officials note they do not have enough information to make general statements, but they are continuing to monitor the wind generation sites.



From the early reports, however, it appears most bats that die near wind turbines do so during the summer months. Since bats fly primarily during the hours around dawn and dusk, it is possible wind turbine operation could be curtailed during those hours to protect the bats. Another positive sign is that bats do not appear to fly as much during windy periods, which is when wind turbines operate more often.

Companies are taking the study into consideration and three proposed wind sites have been abandoned by four companies due to potential impact on wildlife. Two companies abandoned the same site due to its proximity to the Indiana bat, a federally endangered species.

On another front, late in January, PGC officials confirmed that bats under observation in Mifflin County have tested positive for the same fungus that has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of bats in New England during the past couple of years.

No bat deaths have been confirmed from the fungus in Pennsylvania, but it is not known whether the Mifflin County bats are successfully fighting off the fungus or whether observers are just noticing the early symptoms of what will later lead to mass deaths.

Biologists in 20 states and two Canadian provinces are working with universities and agencies in an attempt to discover whether the fungus, referred to as the “white-nose syndrome,” is the cause of the bats’ deaths or just a symptom, and how to prevent its spread.

The condition was first recorded in New York in the winter of 2006-07 and later spread to Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

PA’s ‘Solar Cities’

Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are among 25 U.S. cities that have been named Solar America Cities by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

Solar America Cities is a partnership between the DOE and cities across the country that have committed to accelerating the adoption of solar energy technologies at the local level. The 25 cities selected received a combined \$5 million in DOE funding in addition to substantial hands-on technical assistance over two years.

The City of Pittsburgh’s long-term goal is to meet .5 percent of all electricity needs in the city with solar energy through the Pittsburgh Solar Initiative.

The Solar City Partnership expects to develop a plan to help the City of Philadelphia generate 2.3 megawatts of solar electricity by 2011 and 57.8 megawatts by 2021. ☀