

## Emergency Management

### Evaluating Planning and Preparedness for and Response to Catastrophic Events

In 2011, two extraordinary major storms left Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) with more than 2.4 million combined customer outages in the span of two months. On August 28, 2011, Storm Irene made landfall in Connecticut, affecting 671,789 customers at its peak, resulting in a nine day restoration. Only two months later, an unprecedented October Nor'easter left between 8 and 16 inches of heavy wet snow across the CL&P service territory. Customer outages peaked at 807,228 and restoration took eleven days.

As a result of the large number of outages and extended restoration efforts in the two back-to-back events, CL&P's parent company, Northeast Utilities (NU), hired Davies Consulting to conduct a thorough evaluation of the utility's event response and develop a blueprint of how to improve its emergency response performance moving forward.

Davies Consulting focused on the following key aspects of emergency management and response for transmission, distribution, and generation utilities:

- Emergency Planning and Preparedness;
- Resource Acquisition and Mutual Aid;
- Crisis Communication and Estimated Time of Restoration (ETRs);
- Planning and Damage Assessment;
- Restoration Execution;
- Information Systems and Technology;
- Logistics;
- Call Center Performance; and
- Maintenance and Vegetation Management.

The evaluation concluded that, in both events, CL&P restored customer outages without any serious injuries to the public or company workers (including mutual aid resources) within a timeframe that was comparable to similar major events. CL&P's early adoption of the Incident Command System (ICS) and comprehensive emergency response plans helped provide a framework for managing the restoration, including logistics for the record numbers of off-system resources. CL&P also performed extremely well from the call center perspective, being able to handle a record number of calls by leveraging new systems and available technologies.



These unprecedented events also identified areas to improve CL&P's preparedness and response:

- Conduct additional training and functional exercises;
- Enhance plans and organizational structure to ensure scalability for any size event;
- Improve the ability to provide accurate ETRs;
- Ensure consistent and accurate communication throughout the restoration;
- Obtain adequate off-system resources quickly; and
- Manage a large number of crews more effectively.

Based on these findings, Davies Consulting developed 66 recommendations that provided CL&P and NU with detailed steps to improve future performance in line with industry best practices in emergency planning, preparedness, and response.

The combination of creating an emergency preparedness organization and using the Davies Consulting report as a blueprint guided CL&P to establish a cross-functional team that will drive sustainable change throughout the organization, taking proactive steps to improve its preparedness for major events. The company has conducted an internal functional exercise and participated in a statewide emergency response exercise, begun revising key restoration processes, implemented training for its Town Liaisons and Damage Assessors, and engaged in discussions with local communities to define restoration priorities. While full implementation of the blueprint may take several years to fully execute, CL&P's leadership has already positioned the company to better respond to another major event.