

NEWS

MP, SWL&P send crews to Illinois to restore power after derecho causes widespread damage and outages

Duluth, Minn. — Crews from Minnesota Power and Superior Water, Light and Power are in La Salle, Illinois, today to help Ameren restore power after a derecho with wind gusts of more than 80 miles an hour moved across the state Monday afternoon, downing power lines and poles and leaving thousands without power.

Eighteen MP lineworkers, two SWL&P lineworkers, two supervisors and two fleet mechanics are among the mutual aid workers joining the storm response. Ameren reported more than 15,000 customers in central and southern Illinois were without power this morning.

Each crew member from MP and SWL&P traveled to La Salle on Tuesday in a separate bucket truck or other vehicle as they followed safety protocols in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, crews will adhere to company and electric industry guidelines to maintain the health and safety of employees and the public. Those guidelines include social distancing and limiting contact with others.

“We’re always willing to lend a hand when we can. With fair weather in the forecast here for the immediate future, we have the resources to help Ameren get the power back on for their customers, while maintaining a strong presence here at home to respond to outages should they occur,” said Tim Laeupple, manager of line operations at Minnesota Power. “The pandemic obviously makes a mutual aid response more challenging, but with safety and health guidelines in place, we’re prepared to meet the challenge.”

Mutual aid is a hallmark of the energy industry and lineworkers from Ameren were in Minnesota in 2016 to help Minnesota Power get the lights back on in the aftermath of a devastating storm that left thousands in Duluth and surrounding areas without power.

“While we don’t like to see any company face outages on this scale, we’re happy to be able to return the favor and help Ameren,” Laeupple said. “Our crews are well known for their work ethic and expertise, and we’re proud to assist our friends in Illinois.”

Minnesota Power and Superior Water, Light and Power crews have assisted on many natural disaster-related outages over the years. Last year, MP and SWL&P assisted Manitoba Hydro in restoring power after Manitoba was hit with heavy snow and high winds in a slow-moving storm. Crews also have joined hurricane responses six times in the past 15 years, including in Florida, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey and in Puerto Rico from late 2017 into early 2018 after Hurricanes Irma and Maria. In addition, in 2018, Minnesota Power foresters helped Pacific Gas and Electric inspect and clear burned and dangerous trees from power line easements in the area affected by the Camp Fire, the deadliest wildfire in California history.

PHOTO CAPTIONS: Lineworkers from Minnesota Power and Superior Water, Light and Power are in La Salle, Illinois, to help Ameren restore power. Those who left from the Herbert Service Center in Duluth Tuesday morning include (from left) Jeff Cochran, Chase Ballard, Ben Michaud, Troy Lindsay and Mike Poissant.



Lineworker Chase Ballard prepares for the drive to La Salle, Illinois. Crews will follow appropriate COVID-19 protocols, including wearing a mask.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 145,000 customers, 15 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at www.mnpower.com.

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