

Scenario: Ice Storm

The ice storm hit late in the evening of Tuesday late in January. The ice storm cut a swath through the state with a minimum of two inches of ice accumulated in the affected area, while some locations reported as much as 3-5 inches of ice. The storm took down not only power lines, but also the poles that held up the lines. Trees splintered under the weight of the ice as did telephone poles, cell phone towers, and roofs. By Wednesday, more than 700,000 households and businesses were without power.

Emergencies were ultimately declared in 75% of the state's counties and 70 cities. It quickly became an issue of communication. "Communication towers and lines have gone down, whole communication systems have been devastated," said one state official, which made it difficult to assess conditions and target relief efforts.

On Friday, the Governor activated all members of state's National Guard who then went door-to-door in some areas to contact stranded citizens.

On Saturday, more than a half-million residents were still without power and more than 200,000 had no water because power outages had disabled municipal water systems. 172 emergency shelters had been opened but many local officials were using local radio stations to tell those residents who could, to head south to find a place with no ice because they had no idea how long it was going to take to regain power and water. Residents in rural parts of the state were informed the next day (Sunday) that it may be weeks and, in some rare cases, months until their electricity would be restored.

For utility crews who worked overtime through the weekend, battling subzero conditions Friday and Saturday, the challenge was not just repairing a few downed lines, but instead rebuilding a ravaged utility infrastructure from the ground up.

But by Monday, a quarter-million people were still without power, with scores of residents that had first attempted to ride out the storm giving up and fleeing to shelters.

In rural areas, farmers woke up on Wednesday morning, the morning after the storm hit, to find their fences collapsed under the weight of the ice and their cattle wandering, or worse, frozen to death. Rural residents could not leave their homes because downed telephone and power poles as well as trees blocked roads. Even the intrastate highways were blocked in places where the once wooded roadsides had become a tangled mass of snapped trees.

On Friday after the storm, the county emergency management director reported they had yet to receive any aid from either the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the Red Cross. Twenty-five National Guardsman had arrived in the county but did not have any of the equipment needed to clear away fallen trees.

The Real Story Results: Ice Storm Moves from Response to Recovery

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Less than a month after a brutal ice storm marched through Kentucky, power is back to more than 700,000 customers, all emergency shelters have closed, and the recovery is in full swing.

The catastrophic ice storm - the worst natural disaster in modern Kentucky history - prompted a coordinated, rapid flow of food, water, technology, and generators to the commonwealth.

"Literally every county in Kentucky was immediately impacted to some degree," said Brig. Gen. John W. Heltzel, director of the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM) who led the Commonwealth's massive response.

Federal disaster aid was made available almost immediately through a Presidential Emergency Declaration on Jan. 28 - less than 12 hours after Gov. Steve Beshear's request. A major disaster declaration for 93 of Kentucky's 120 counties was signed by President Obama on Feb. 5 to reimburse costs for eligible debris removal and emergency protective measures. Commonwealth officials have gathered data for nine additional counties, which may be added to the disaster at a later date.

The Kentucky National Guard deployed 4,100 soldiers at the peak of the storm and engaged in a door-to-door "wellness" campaign. Soldiers assisted with debris removal, traffic control and other missions. They also delivered life-saving and life-sustaining commodities.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Federal Emergency Management Agency Acting Administrator Nancy Ward toured the damage with Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear.

Briefings were held this week with public and private nonprofit entities as the first step toward reimbursing them for disaster-related emergency expenses.

"Clearly, we've transitioned from response to recovery," said Kim R. Kadesch, federal coordinating officer for the disaster. "Now our mission is to support the commonwealth, local governments and eligible private nonprofits to assist them in the recovery and reimbursement of eligible expenses associated with the disaster."

A by-the-numbers look at the disaster (As of COB Feb. 19):

- **\$115 million** in preliminary disaster assessments;
- **36 fatalities** (carbon monoxide 11, hypothermia 8, vehicular 4, cardiac arrest 4, fire 3, other 6);
- **987,810 meals** delivered;
- **1.9 million** liters water delivered;
- **500 cots** delivered;
- **1,000 blankets** delivered;
- **4,911 miles** of road affected by storm;
- **220 shelters** served 7,009 people at the peak of the storm, with last shelter closing Feb. 13;
- **10 state emergency management agencies** - Tennessee, North Carolina, West Virginia, Indiana, Ohio, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama and Wisconsin - sent more than 600 personnel, cots with bedding, wood chippers, generators, communications equipment, dump trucks and other large equipment to help move trees and debris;

- **4 FEMA Mobile Emergency Response System (MERS) vehicles** provided critical telecommunications support after the storm in key locations throughout the state: the Emergency Operations Center and staging areas in Frankfort, Paducah, Greenville and Fort Campbell. Also provided mobile towers and radios;
- More than **250 generators** arranged for, moved and installed at critical facilities by the Kentucky National Guard, FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
- **25 volunteer organizations** offered help from 15 states.

Other disaster details:

- State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) engaged at 7 a.m. on Jan. 27 and remained at full activation level through 9 p.m. on Feb. 15. Currently, the SEOC is maintaining situational awareness staffing daily from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.;
- The FEMA Region IV Regional Response Coordination Center increased from monitoring to response stance on Jan. 29 and deployed an advance emergency response team to the SEOC. Initial Operating Facility opened on Jan. 30, co-located at SEOC. Joint Field Office opened in Frankfort on Feb. 7;
- The U.S. Department of Energy worked with the Kentucky Public Service Commission to assess the status of the power grid and set restoration timelines.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service assisted with debris clearing.

Discussion

The purpose of this scenario is to assess how well your Emergency Operations Plan would enable you to respond to this situation. You will use the worksheet, Handout 4 – Ice Storm Evaluation, to note your evaluations as you proceed through this discussion.

1. Because the intensity of the ice storm was significantly greater than expected and it occurred overnight, nearly all the key decision-makers were trapped in their homes and unable to get to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the first 24 - 36 hours.
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?
2. Electrical service was disrupted by the ice storm both immediately and in some communities for as long as 4+ weeks. As a result, many water and sewage treatment plants can not function. While the emergency shelters have some supplies of bottled water, it was also assumed that there would be access to municipal water supplies and sewage treatment.
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?
3. The disruption of electrical service combined with the snapping of telephone poles and the partial collapse of some cell towers has led to the complete disruption of communications both within the community and to those outside the community.
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?
4. The ice storm broke down miles of farm fencing allowing cattle and horses and other animals to wander off their property. Thus, to the hazard of ice and debris covered roads could be added the movement of animals. Moreover, loose livestock could disrupt efforts to clear roadways. For nearly all the farmers, even if they could round up their cattle, what will they do with them?
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?
5. Rural residents in many communities found themselves literally unable to leave their homes because roads were blocked by debris and/or too hazardous. Even if they had wanted to go to an emergency shelter, they could not get there. You are worried about elderly members of your community as well as those with health conditions.
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?
6. You are a small and very rural community. The closest interstate or intrastate highway is 25 miles along a two lane state road. Significant portions of this road are simply impassable because of downed trees, utility poles, and utility lines. The people in town have doubled and tripled up into those homes with gas or propane heaters, but food and other supplies in the community are beginning to get low.
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?
7. You are a farming community and there are at least 15 dairies in the area. None of these farms have access to electricity to run their milkers or their refrigeration units. The bulk trucks can't get in to pick up their milk, and you know that many have feed delivered weekly.
Does your plan provide guidance on what to do in this situation?