

How AEP Manages Major Storms

When major storms damage power lines, AEP works safely and swiftly to restore service to customers. Listed below are the ways AEP prepares for storms and the steps we take to restore power during and after the storm.



What does AEP do to manage a major storm?

AEP continually monitors weather forecasts via the National Weather Service and local weather communications networks so that we are aware of impending storms. This allows us to work on staffing for restoration efforts even before the storm hits.

During a major storm, workers from portions of our 11-state service territory are called in to assist local employees. We also enlist the help of contract workers as well as personnel from other electric companies through mutual assistance agreements.

In addition, customer solutions centers operate in “storm mode,” using extra telephone lines and bringing in additional representatives to better serve our customers. They also employ advanced telephone technologies to handle the unusually large volume of customer calls. These systems provide updates regarding the restoration effort and allow customers to report an outage without speaking to a representative.

What is the best way to get information on the restoration effort?

Battery-operated radios and televisions are the best ways for you to be informed of storm restoration progress. Informational releases are sent to the news media regarding restoration progress at least three times a day during major power outages.

You also can get information online at www.AEP.com/lightsout if you have a laptop or other battery-powered Internet-connected device.

Why can't I talk directly with a customer services representative?

During major outages, you may be connected to an automated outage reporting system due to the high volume of calls. In addition, our communications systems give priority to outage calls dealing with safety concerns — such as fallen power lines — so that they receive service as quickly as possible.

Why can't an agent tell me when my power will be restored?

It is impossible to accurately predict restoration times of specific circuits serving particular residences because of the many challenges that restoration workers face.

What is AEP's restoration process?

In all outages, we work to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. Outages during storm events often are extended and can last for several days due to damage to all facilities located in the area hit by the storm.

In every storm restoration plan, we implement a basic process. Hazards, such as fallen power lines, are attended to first. Then emergency facilities, such as fire and police stations, hospitals, and calls from 911 agencies, receive top priority.

After these locations are restored, we work on main lines, or circuits, that will restore the largest number of customers in the shortest period of time. After main lines are restored, secondary power lines that serve smaller clusters of homes are repaired. Finally, lines that feed service drops to individual homes are repaired.

Why would service trucks pass by my house without repairing anything?

Work may need to be completed at a nearby location in order to restore service to you and your neighbors.

Why can my home be the only one on the block without power?

Fuses or circuit breakers in your home could have tripped and

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halted power; tree limbs could have fallen on the line serving your home; fuses on the transformer that serves your home may have tripped or could be damaged, and the primary line feeding the transformer could be damaged.

Why would I lose electricity in only part of my house?

You could have tripped a circuit breaker, blown a fuse or have a broken connector or wire at one of the service leads to your house. Sometimes damage to these leads leaves only the 120-volt outlets (or some of them) working. In this case, larger appliances that need 240-volt service — such as water heaters, air conditioners and ovens — may be inoperable until repairs are made. It is safe to use the outlets you have available while you check with an electrician. However, if some of your lights are extremely bright or extremely dim, you should avoid using outlets connected to these circuits to avoid potential damage to equipment. If there is a problem with a service lead to your home, our crews will repair the wires when they arrive to restore service.

Why do I sometimes experience brief outages that call for resetting appliances?

Usually, these outages occur when a protective device, called a recloser, detects interference on the line. If interference is detected, the line will de-energize briefly to determine if the problem is prolonged or only temporary. If the problem is temporary, the line will re-energize quickly. If the problem is prolonged, the line will de-energize.

How does AEP handle tree damage?

AEP contractors clear trees throughout the year to keep power lines free of limbs and debris. Following a storm, our contractors do not remove fallen limbs or branches caused by the storm from your property. For tree and debris removal, you will need to call a landscape or tree contractor.

Do not attempt to remove tree limbs or debris within 10 feet of a power line. Stay completely away from any fallen power line or sparking equipment. If you notice fallen lines or sparking equipment, please call us at the number on your electric bill as soon as possible.

Backup generators

Some customers use backup, or standby, generators to provide power during outages. Please notify us if you are using a backup generator. Operating a generator poses a potential safety hazard for line workers and you.

The problem arises when power from the backup generators feed power onto distribution lines, which can electrocute personnel working on the lines. On the other hand, power from electric company lines can feed into the generator and cause a fire at your residence. To avoid these hazards, be sure to have your generator installed by an electrician, and be sure that it has a manual transfer switch to isolate the device from the power grid. Remember that appliances can be connected directly to the generator independent of the household wiring. Make sure that all manufacturers' instructions are followed and that only the recommended number of appliances is plugged into the generator. ■