

*“Serving Our Commonwealth”*



*THE Kentucky Ice Storm of 2009  
&  
Public Information*



**KYEM**

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## *THE Kentucky Ice Storm of 2009*





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**“Winter Storm of the Century!”**

**“Catastrophic Winter Weather  
Event!”**

**These are strong words to be  
used in a NWS weather  
forecast, but words which  
proved to be prophetic!**



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### Overview of THE Storm:

Beginning on January 26, 2009 and through January 28, 2009, the Commonwealth of Kentucky experienced the most widely damaging weather event in modern history. Over **\$330 million dollars** in damages were sustained by governmental entities and certain private nonprofits.

In response to the storm, the first-ever total call-up of the Kentucky National Guard occurred. The Commonwealth’s entire Army National Guard and units of the Air National Guard. Altogether, **4,600 troops** deployed. There were **36 deaths** (11 carbon monoxide, 8 hypothermia, 4 vehicular, 4 cardiac arrest, 3 fire, and 6 other) which made this the Commonwealth’s most lethal ice storm in memory and one of its deadliest modern weather events.

More than **250 emergency generators** were placed in critical facilities across Kentucky through the partnering between FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Kentucky Emergency Management. This campaign was the largest of its kind in the history of the Corps of Engineers.

**Ten** state emergency management agencies – Tennessee, North Carolina, West Virginia, Indiana, Ohio, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, and Wisconsin – sent more than **600 personnel**, cost with bedding, wood chippers, generators, communications equipment, dump trucks, and other large equipment to help move trees and debris. **Four (4)** FEMA Mobile Emergency response System (MERS) vehicles provided critical telecommunications support after the storm in key locations across the state.



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A wintry mix moved into southern Indiana and central Kentucky on the night of Monday, January 26, 2009. Precipitation began as light freezing drizzle and freezing rain over the entire area, but changed to sleet and then snow overnight into the early morning hours of Tuesday across southern Indiana and northern Kentucky. Up to 6 inches of snow accumulated across the northernmost sections of the state. Freezing rain continued over southern Kentucky.

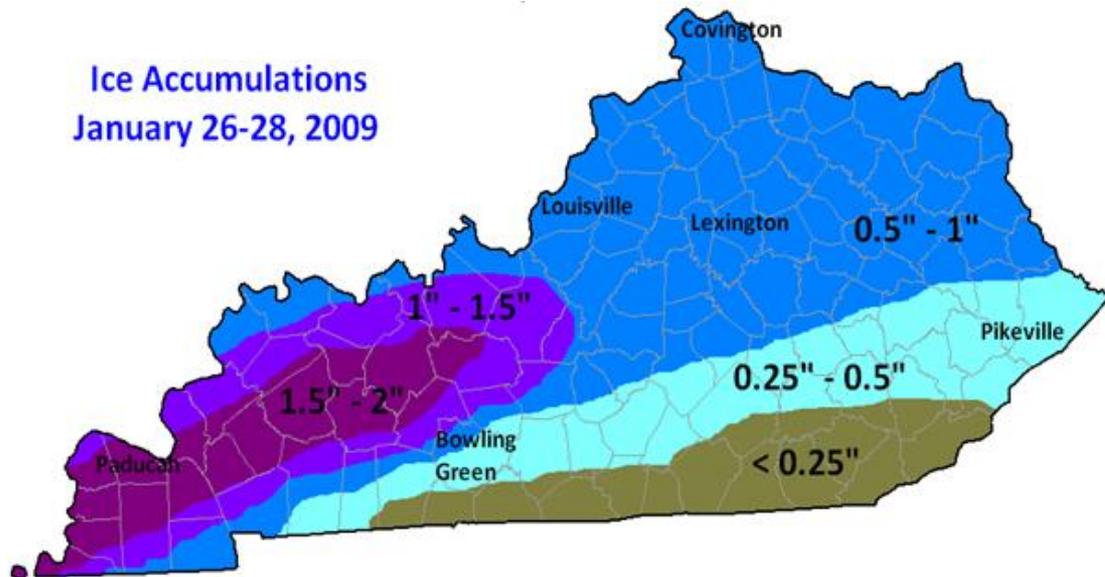
On Tuesday the 27th, precipitation changed to freezing rain over southern Indiana and northern Kentucky, and to rain over southern Kentucky. Ice over an inch thick was reported in many locations from the freezing rain.





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Tuesday night freezing rain and sleet continued over southern Indiana, freezing rain transitioned to rain over northern Kentucky, and rain, occasionally heavy, continued over southern Kentucky. Minor...mainly river flooding developed in some spots by Wednesday from the steady rain. On the morning of Wednesday, January 28, precipitation changed over to snow from northwest to southeast across the area. About 3 to 4 inches of additional snow accumulation piled up in the north, with less to the south.





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The storm caused Kentucky's largest power outage on record, with 609,000 homes and businesses without power across the state. Property damage was widespread, with the damage due to falling trees, large tree limbs, and power lines weighed down by ice. In the Louisville metropolitan area, 205,000 lost power and it took up to 10 days to get everyone hooked back up. In far Western KY some rural homeowners were without power for five weeks.



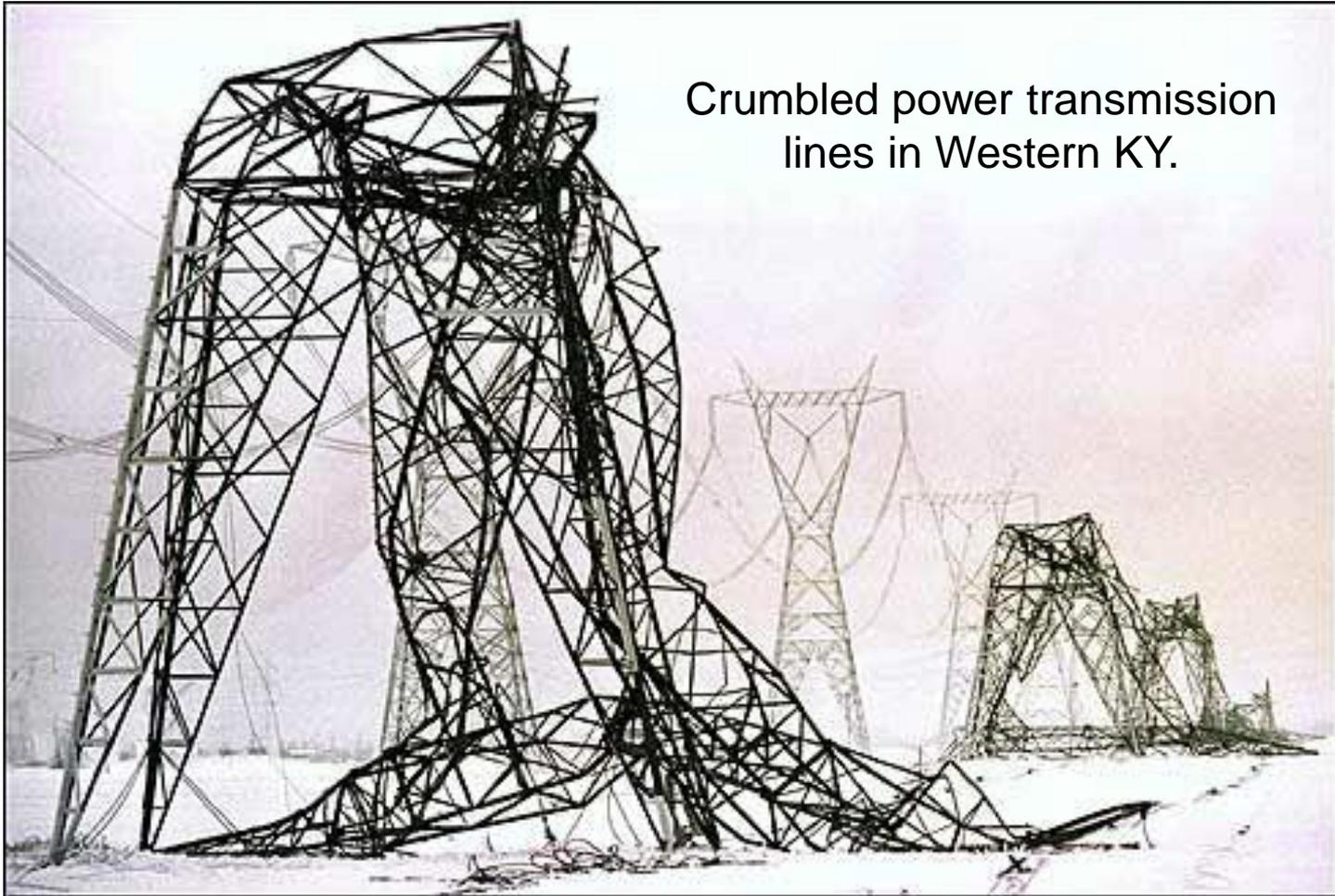


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**Many county EOCs were  
without communications and  
unable to notify the State EOC**



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Crumbled power transmission lines in Western KY.



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Land lines were down and cell phone service was basically nonexistent due to commercial carrier's dishes misaligned by ice build up.



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**After three days a fly over was conducted over the most impacted area of far Western Kentucky.**

**Seasoned politicians and National Guard soldiers came back visibly shaken with comments of “Worst I have ever seen!”, “Unbelievable!”, “Looks like a war zone!”**



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**A federal emergency was  
declared on January 28  
covering 103 of Kentucky’s  
120 counties!**



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**So how did we communicate?**



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# **We Didn't!**

**At least not at first!**



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# Public Information & the JIS/JIC



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**Weather related safety messages and resource links were issued in advance of the approaching weather system via traditional media, and during the storm.**

**\*KYEM did not engage in the use of social media at this time.**





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**Initially during the storm public information support was nonexistent or scarce:**

- My back up PIO lived 20 miles away & was snowed in**
  
- National Guard PAOs were unavailable, while supporting Guard efforts**
  
- State PIOs were snowed in or “holed up!”**



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**When the storm did break other State PIOs did not respond to the call to report to the JIC, thinking if they did no one would represent their agency or their efforts!**

**KYEM assigned one person to help answer my phones. He lasted two days!**

**Local Red Cross sent a volunteer to take calls. He lasted two days, as well!**

**\* During these first few days I was working 15 to 17 hour shifts**



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**Fortunately our EMAC Coordinator recognized my need and sent out a EMAC PIO mission request for PIO support**





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**Mississippi comes to the rescue!**





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**Through EMAC , three experienced MS PIOs reported to the KY EOC and supported our Joint Information Center from Feb 2 thru Feb 14. During that time period the CSEPP PIO was also able to report in.**

- **Media liaison support**
- **Writing press releases**
- **Established a JIC Call Center**
- **Media Monitoring**



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**KYEM designated a liaison\* to keep elected officials updated.**

**\*Which later became a permanent full time position within KYEM**



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## **Feb 5<sup>th</sup> President Obama declares a Major Disaster for KY**

- **In advance of the FEMA Joint Filed Office opening, three FEMA PIOs arrived in KY to provide JIC field support**
- **An additional FEMA PIO arrives two days later to provide JIC support**



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State JIC Team (KYEM, CSEPP, FEMA) prior to FEMA JFO JIC opening



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## **State JIC products**

- Press releases
- Talking Points
- Media interviews
- EAS safety messages
- Flyers
- Governor’s press conferences



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# Public Service Commission Power Safety Tips

## PSC Urges Caution Following Snow Storm – Page 2

Falling trees or branches or sagging power lines may have damaged the connections between the utility company's overhead line and a customer's electric system. The connections are usually in the form of a masthead – a conduit connected to the service line – or, in older homes, an eyebolt which holds the line in place and an insulated line leading to the meter. In some cases, the meter or meter base may also be damaged.

Once power is restored, damaged connections or meters could pose an electrical or fire hazard if not repaired or if repaired improperly.

"It is critical that damaged connections be repaired by a qualified professional and inspected before power is restored," PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. "In past outages, fires and severe damage have been caused by damaged or improperly repaired service connections."

Repairing a service connection or meter base is the responsibility of the individual customer.

The meter base is the square or rectangular box on which the meter itself is mounted. It belongs to the property owner. The meter itself – the circular, glass-enclosed portion that attaches to the meter base – is the property of the utility company.

Customers with damaged connections or meters should take the following steps:

- Notify the utility company that the service connection, meter base and/or meter is damaged. The utility can then make sure that the line is not energized until repairs are completed.
- In the event that only the meter itself is damaged, contact the utility to have it repaired or replaced and your service restored.
- Contact an electrician to repair the meter base or service connection. The repair work can be done prior to power being restored in an area, thus eliminating any additional delays.
- The electrician will obtain the proper meter base from the utility. Some utilities impose no charge for the meter base, but the customer will bear the installation cost.
- Have the repairs inspected by a state-certified inspector working for your local government. The electrician should be able to help arrange the inspection.
- Notify the utility when the repairs are complete and have been approved. A utility technician will install a new meter and restore the power.
- Keep all repair records and contact your property insurer.

Residents SHOULD NOT attempt to remove any branches, limbs or trees that have fallen across service connections or other utility lines. Notify the utility to arrange for the debris to be removed.

-more-

## PSC Urges Caution Following Snow Storm – Page 3

The PSC also reminds customers using a generator for temporary electrical power to do so in a manner that insures their safety and the safety of those working to restore power. Keys to safe operation of generators include:

- To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, generators should only be operated outside in well-ventilated areas. Do not operate generators basements, garages, breezeways, near windows, doors, heating system intakes or any location where exhaust fumes could enter a building.
- Make sure a generator is properly sized for the load you will place on it. Remember that starting an electric motor, such as a refrigerator compressor, requires more electricity than the amount needed to keep it running. **DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUR GENERATOR.**
- Use only three-prong, grounded extension cords, properly rated for the load, to connect appliances to generators.
- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FEED POWER INTO YOUR HOME BY ADAPTING AN EXTENSION CORD TO CONNECT A GENERATOR TO A WALL OUTLET. THIS CAN CAUSE A FIRE.
- DO NOT CONNECT A GENERATOR TO INSIDE WIRING IN ANY WAY UNLESS YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IS EQUIPPED WITH A TRANSFER SWITCH THAT PREVENTS POWER FROM FLOWING BACK INTO (BACKFEEDING) THE WIRES THAT SUPPLY YOUR ELECTRICITY.

Backfeeding poses a severe danger to workers attempting to restore electrical service.

They can be severely injured or killed by power flowing back into lines which they assume are not carrying electricity. Also, if the line to your home or business becomes grounded, backfeeding can permanently damage your generator.

"Getting everybody's power restored after a storm, and in these difficult working conditions, is going to take some time," Armstrong said. "People need to be patient and, above all, remain safe."

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.

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## JIC products shared during wellness checks and at PODS

Safety Alert · Safety Alert · Safety Alert

### Portable Generators Pose A Serious Carbon Monoxide Hazard

**⚠ DANGER**

**Using a generator indoors CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES.**

Generator exhaust contains carbon monoxide. This is a poison you cannot see or smell.

 <b>NEVER</b> use inside a home or garage, <b>EVEN IF</b> doors and windows are open.	 <b>Only use OUTSIDE</b> and far away from windows, doors, and vents.
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Provided By: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission  
[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) (800) 638-2772

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (800) CDC-INFO

### Chainsaw Safety

Avoid injury by using chainsaws safely

- Plan the cut before you start
- Start the chainsaw at least 10 feet from the fuel can
- Keep both feet on the ground when cutting
- Hold the chainsaw with two hands
- Follow the owners manual
- Use a sharp chain
- Keep others far away
- Wear safety gear (hard hat, cut-proof pants, safety glasses, hearing protection, gloves and boots)

- Do not cut with the tip of the chainsaw
- Do not cut with the chainsaw above your waist
- Do not work alone
- Do not climb with a chainsaw
- Do not cut near a powerline
- Do not use a chainsaw when you're tired
- Do not use a chainsaw when drinking alcohol

**SAFER · HEALTHIER · PEOPLE™**



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**FEB 10**

**FEMA Joint Field Office opens and the  
JFO Joint Information Center is operational.**

**The Calvary has arrived!**





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# Lesson Learned!



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**A JIC of one is not a JIC!**



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- When I realized I could not handle the situation alone, it was too late!**
  - **The KY EOC was activated for 28 days straight, during which time I lost 12 pounds! I erred by not seeking help sooner!**
  
- Garner the support of your agency**
  - **Recognize the need to have consistency in trained JIC personnel and the importance of division personnel available to fill essential JIC positions**
  
- Pre identify and train your agency personnel whom you can depend on and task**
  - **KYEM personnel have been identified and assigned permanent tasks and report automatically whenever the State JIC is activated, which provides a JIC skeleton crew that we can rely on until outside agency PIOs report in.**



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- ❑ **After the Ice Storm the AAR identified the reluctance of State PIOs to report to the JIC. The JIC SOP was rewritten which includes language to automatically “stand up” at an EOC activation of Level III or higher\*. The KYEM Director notifies the ESF Partners and Cabinets and a notification is sent to pre-identified State PIOs to report to the State JIC as soon as possible, or to send their designated alternate!**

**\*This change to the JIC SOP has proven VERY EFFECTIVE!!!**



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# Lesson Learned

## Dark Skies

- Recognize the severity of events and possible impacts
- Issue pre event JIC “Warning Orders”
- Ask for help as soon as you recognize the need





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# Lesson Learned

## Blue Skies!

- Obtain “buy-in” from your agency and fellow PIOs
- Educate outside agencies decision makers on the JIS and how a JIC functions
- Invite Cabinet officials to tour the EOC
- Include the media





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## **Lesson Learned!**

- Educate outside agencies decision makers on the JIS/JIC and explain the function of a JIC**
  
- Obtain "buy-in" from your agency and fellow PIOs**
  
- Invite Cabinet officials and Private Sector to tour the EOC and JIC**



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## Lesson Learned!

- Provide annual JIS/JIC and PIO training
- Take advantage of exercise opportunities, include JIC injects
- Invite PIOs to an operational JFO/JIC
- Train – train – TRAIN!



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## Looking Ahead!

- ❑ July 2015 hosted the pilot FEMA Train the Trainer G289, G290, 291 Public Information Officer Series
  - Kentucky now has 17 certified FEMA G289, G290, G291 Instructors.
  
- ❑ Since July 2015 in four separate offerings, Kentucky has instructed 61 personnel in G289 and G290.
  
- ❑ KYEM is in the process of identifying and integrating trained PIOs in our Incident Management Teams (IMT) and establishing PIO Strike Teams.



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**Questions will be available during a Q & A session!**





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**Gary ‘Buddy’ Rogers**  
Public Information Officer  
Kentucky Emergency Management

[Gary.w.rogers24.nfg@mail.mil](mailto:Gary.w.rogers24.nfg@mail.mil)

Ofc. Tel. 502.607.1611  
Cell Tel. 502.382.6006



**BE AWARE - BE PREPARED - HAVE A PLAN!**