

The Bottom Line

In the days following the super-storm, line crews worked under blue skies restoring power but NSP's financial people could see only red. For them, the Big Wind meant big bucks with the total loss adding up to more than \$4 million—the equivalent of the company's entire payroll for more than three months.

The items taking up the most digits on the calculator tapes are those required for reconstruction of the 345 kV line. Poles and framing for each of the 66 downed structures cost \$4,700. Shield wire, conductor and insulators add another \$5,400 per structure while labor for installing each one is about \$5,500.

By the time you add stores expense, transportation, contingencies and overhead, the total cost per structure adds up to \$29,000. With related expenses included, replacing the 10 miles of line will amount to approximately \$2,250,000.

Initial expenses for repairing other damage done by the July 15 storm total \$1,100,000. This includes ma-

terials and labor, payments to tree trimming contractors, and reimbursement for crews from Wisconsin Power & Light, Wisconsin Public Service and Donovan Construction of St. Paul. Another \$650,000 which is expected to be incurred before permanent repairs are made brings the total to \$4 million.

Not included in that figure, however, is approximately \$100,000 in net income that will never be realized because of lost sales. While the system was down, sales were obviously down as well. Sales to eastern Wisconsin utilities will continue to be severely curtailed as long as the 345 kV line is inoperable.

"One of the hidden costs of the storm is the expense of operating oil-fired turbines," according to Glenn Thorsen, vice president of finance. "As long as the 345 kV is out, we'll need to rely on our peaking plant at Wheaton."

Four of the six Wheaton turbines are operational and in service as needed at about 50 megawatts each. At that load, each turbine burns 4,500 gallons of oil per hour. If all

four units operate an average of eight hours per day, five days a week for two months, the oil costs alone will exceed \$4.7 million.

The cost of that oil is passed on to NSP customers as a fuel clause adjustment and will result in higher bills beginning in September. Because of the coordinating agreement with NSP-Minnesota, however, the oil costs will be shared throughout the entire NSP system and the increase on individual bills will not be substantial.

"Unlike homeowners, we don't have an insurance agent we can call on during times like this," Thorsen explained, "but we have talked to the Public Service Commission accounting staff about amortizing the \$1.5 million in expense."

Thorsen said his staff is preparing additional testimony to be presented as part of the company's pending rate case. That testimony will request that the expense be written off over the next two or three years with much of it being recovered through the rate structure.

Although there is no certainty that this will be granted by the PSC, Thorsen adds, some precedent was set by the 1976 ice storm in southern Wisconsin. ■

Letters

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I understand there are people complaining about the "slowness" of electrical crews and are threatening to sue for loss of meat and other things.

How anyone in this time of disaster can be so very blind is quite beyond the reaches of my imagination. Perhaps one of them can show a workable solution where wires are split in many pieces, or literally wedged in tree trunks, can work as they normally do.

Perhaps one of them would like to work as many hours as the crews are now working and listen to people complain. Many of the workers are not from this area...yet they are giving 100 percent.

When it comes time to decide on whether the power company needs an alternate route for future power lines, this disaster should be remembered. Perhaps lines on a second route could help maintain power if another is taken out of commission.

Instead of complaining, let us praise electrical crews for giving so much, so long. And let us pray they will be given strength to continue and thank God we have not lost our lives instead of our electrical power.

Pamela Jonson

Those dark nights
When I had no lights
I knew I need not fret
This problem you would correct.

Hearing friends speak of their awaited delight,

I knew you were serving with all your might.

Sure enough, while by my candle I sat,

I heard a click and hum... "What was that?"

I ran to my kitchen and what did I see,

My light was lit... OH GLORY BE!

Oh, NSP, I want you to know—
All who are busy, constantly on the go—

Your continuous drive since Tuesday night

Is greatly appreciated...

Anonymous card