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(Neb)-NPPD Crews Heading Home After Sandy Assistance

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(Columbus)- Line technicians from Nebraska Public Power District are returning from the east coast after two weeks of assisting electric utilities in West Virginia and New Jersey restore electricity to areas hit by Hurricane Sandy. The NPPD crew, made up of 16 line technicians, was notified Sunday evening that they were being released from their work with Jersey Central Power & Light, and then began the long-trek home Monday and are expected back by mid-week.

The crew, led by NPPD Distribution Superintendent Dennis Wademan of Scottsbluff included technicians from various NPPD operations. Some of the crew included Zac Bryant (Scottsbluff), Rob Pedersen (Scottsbluff), and Doug Johnson (Gordon).

According to President and CEO Pat Pope, NPPD is extremely proud of this team's effort to go above and beyond their normal call of duty. The crews left October 31 and initially assisted Appalachian Power Company, a division of American Electric Power, in West Virginia. More than 150,000 Appalachian Power Company customers were reported to be without power due to blizzard conditions and heavy snow in the state from the storm.

Organizing this assistance was the Midwest Mutual Aid group composed of various utilities in Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. NPPD's crew completed work in West Virginia November 4 and moved east to one of the hardest hit areas of Hurricane Sandy – central New Jersey – where they assisted Jersey Central Power & Light and other restoration crews from around the country to restore power. Over 400,000 customers were without power and several thousand power line poles were reportedly broken as a result of the storm.

The NPPD team worked 16-hour days with mandatory eight-hours of sleep while assigned to restoration duty. In New Jersey, the team was initially housed in a tent with 200 cots. On November 7, they were relocated to Flemington, N.J., 50 miles from Philadelphia. From there they moved into a semi-trailer converted into sleeping quarters. John Humphrey, NPPD's transmission and distribution manager, said, "Our crews were very complimentary about the logistics and organization, with the exception of the fuel situation. When they fueled trucks they were limited to approximately 50 gallons per vehicle which was not enough to run all day."

(Story courtesy NPPD)