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Minnesota Power Earns EEI’s ‘Emergency Recovery Award’ for Restoration Efforts After Severe Thunderstorms

Palm Beach, Fla. (January 11, 2017) – The Edison Electric Institute (EEI) on Wednesday, Jan. 11, presented Minnesota Power with the association’s “Emergency Recovery Award” for its outstanding power restoration efforts after severe thunderstorms hit Minnesota in July 2016. Minnesota Power is a utility division of ALLETE Inc. (NYSE: ALE).

The award is presented twice annually to EEI member companies to recognize their extraordinary efforts to restore power to customers after service disruptions caused by severe weather conditions or other natural events. The winners were chosen by a panel of judges following an international nomination process, and the awards were presented during the winter EEI Board of Directors and CEO Meeting.

The July 21, 2016, storms with wind gusts of up to 100 mph were the most damaging to hit Minnesota Power’s transmission and distribution system in half a century. About 57,000 customers across Minnesota Power’s service territory—more than one-third of the company’s 145,000 customers—were without power in the immediate aftermath of the storms. Half of those had electricity restored within 24 hours. Others experienced multiday outages of varying degree as numerous uprooted trees and other storm debris made assessing damage and gaining access to complete repairs difficult. Minnesota Power crews and mutual aid responders worked more than 31,000 hours to restore power to customers and achieved 100 percent restoration within a week.

“The tireless work by Minnesota Power’s crews and the company’s mutual aid partners to restore service following a major summer storm system exemplifies our industry’s commitment to customer service and safety,” said EEI President Tom Kuhn. “The courageous and dedicated Minnesota Power crews who faced dangerous conditions in the wake of these storms are greatly deserving of this terrific recognition.”

In addition to the line and vegetation crews visible in neighborhoods and on streets, the company’s storm response included hundreds of employees in support roles. The company’s emergency response plan and frequent updates to customers through traditional and social media also played important roles in the effective response.

“In Minnesota Power’s 110-year history, the week spent responding to one of the worst and most widespread storms to hit our system in 50 years have to be among our

employees' finest," said Brad Oachs, senior vice president-ALLETE and president-regulated operations. "Their dedication to safety and customer service is phenomenal."

Al Hodnik, ALLETE chairman, president and CEO, also praised Minnesota Power employees.

"Our terrific employees and other industry partners rose to meet all of the challenges, fully recognizing that our customers' everyday lives were put on hold as they worked safely to restore power," Hodnik said. "We saw employees' unwavering dedication to customer service and we appreciated the support from the community even as some experienced several days without electricity. Minnesota Power and the communities we serve met the challenge of this storm for the ages through the power of pulling together."

Photo caption: (L-R) Al Hodnik, ALLETE Chairman, President & CEO, Brad Oachs, President of Regulated Operations & Sr. VP ALLETE and Tom Kuhn, EEI President.

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EEI is the association that represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies. Our members provide electricity for 220 million Americans, operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and directly and indirectly employ more than one million workers. EEI has dozens of international electric companies as International Members, and hundreds of industry suppliers and related organizations as Associate Members.