

EDITION 25 • SUMMER 2023

# THE **LODESTAR** • NEWSLETTER •

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTRIC UTILITIES



## *Inside this Edition*

PAGE 2

### **10 STEPS TO SUCCESS FOR STORM PREPAREDNESS**

AN ARTICLE BY **CHARLIE KRAMBEER**  
AND INTRODUCTION BY **KEN RENNER**

PAGE 3

### **10 STEPS TO SUCCESS FOR STORM PREPAREDNESS**

(CONTINUED FROM **PAGE 2**)

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO**

(CONTINUED FROM **BACK PAGE**)

### **STAR ENERGY EARNS MINNESOTA SAFETY AWARD**

### **JOIN THE STAR TEAM: CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

**TO BE A TRUSTED PARTNER, LEADING THE ELECTRIC POWER INDUSTRY BY PROVIDING A PORTFOLIO OF INNOVATIVE ENGINEERING, TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS, AND UTILITY SERVICES.**

# 10 STEPS TO SUCCESS FOR Storm Preparedness

AN ARTICLE BY CHARLIE KRAMBEER

AND INTRODUCTION BY KEN RENNER

*With summer in full swing, the inevitable severe storm will soon be upon us. Catastrophic weather events have a way of shining a light on any lack of preparedness, catching us off guard. But with proper planning and training, severe weather events don't have to leave us scrambling. Help your utility withstand this season's severe weather with our 10 Steps to Success for Storm Preparedness.*

## 01 UP-TO-DATE GIS

*During storm season, a utility's Geographic Information System (GIS) is put to the ultimate test. Making sure your GIS is displaying accurate and up-to-date information is key. One missed work order or misplaced device can have a rippling effect across a utility's system.*

## UPDATE OMS

*GIS is the backbone of an Outage Management System (OMS) because it provides the parent-child relationship from the substation to the consumer. An OMS acts on this parent-child relationship to predict devices and line sections affected by an outage. Predictions can become more accurate by adding more devices to your GIS and updating the connectivity model more frequently.*

## 03 CALL-HANDLING

*Many utilities utilize an after-hours call-handling service to take member calls and dispatch outages. Set a protocol with this service directing when to stop dispatching based on the number of outages in the system. The sooner they stop dispatching, the less time it will take to unfasten an OMS.*

## AMI SYSTEM

*Make sure to understand how your Advanced Metering System (AMI) operates, what system capabilities are available, and where possible faults can occur. Pinging only a few meters at a time may lead to higher success.*

*If your utility relies heavily on AMI, schedule routine tests on the receiver's backup battery to minimize the chance of fault during a large outage.*

*Some AMI systems allow different modes for different types of events where the meters are more receptive to the event you're looking for.*

## 05 COMMON LANGUAGE

*Implementing a common language between the office and crew members will help alleviate confusion during storm restoration. Decide on how to communicate a specific location on the system. Examples include customer and device map location, pole number, or even customer address. If everyone is talking about the same type of location, it can be a powerful tool in identifying exact spots to restore power in an OMS.*

## MUTUAL AID

*When a storm occurs, have a plan in place to acquire mutual aid. Create GIS maps that are shareable to visiting crew members that reflect the most up-to-date GIS system. When creating these maps, be aware of what information is shared, as it may contain confidential information.*

*Identify employees that will communicate with visiting crew members. These employees should be familiar with the GIS and the symbology on the maps and be able to tell where the nearest open point is and what the direction of the feed is. Communicating this information is crucial for the safety of visiting crew members so they can sectionalize the line properly and safely restore power as soon as possible.*

*At the start of each day, have a group meeting to share progress, discuss goals, and communicate when and where each crew will be working.*

*Lastly, organize a plan for the safety and health of the crew as they work. Decide what meals are best for this situation and assign employees to deliver. In addition, pre-arrange hotel assignments for visiting crew members.*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO CONTINUED: *SUMMIT SYNOPSIS*



In May, STAR hosted a DER Summit. This day-long event provided an overview of Minnesota's Distributed Energy Resource Interconnection Process, an update on NOVA Power Portal™, and an overview of Energy Solutions: Present & Future. STAR's guest speakers from Briggs and Stratton®, Sequoia Cross, Vice President of Energy Storage, and Brooke Plantz, Business Development Manager, (pictured left) provided an outline of current energy challenges, grid resiliency, and policy drivers. They also discussed emerging communication technology used to assist in load management to help provide resiliency and reduce the impact of planned and unplanned outages.

## STAR ENERGY EARNS MINNESOTA SAFETY AWARD

Lisa Tickhill, CLCP (pictured right) accepted the Minnesota Safety Council Governor's Safety Meritorious Award on behalf of STAR Energy Services at the Minnesota Safety and Health Conference in May.

"Congratulations to STAR Energy Services for their hard work, attention and dedication to safety," said Paul Aasen, president of the Minnesota Safety Council. "Keeping people safe and achieving award-winning performance is no accident. It takes everyone from the front line to executive leadership to help people work safe, drive safe and live safe."



COMPLIANCE & SAFETY SPECIALIST | Based out of Mankato OR Alexandria, MN

GIS CONSULTANT | Based out of Mankato OR Alexandria, MN

IT CONSULTANT | Based out of Mankato, MN

MANAGER, FINANCE | Based out of Alexandria, MN

To view our current career opportunities and full job descriptions, visit our website at: [www.star-energy.com/careers](http://www.star-energy.com/careers)

## 07 COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

When storm damage is severe, you will need to communicate power restoration updates with your members. Identifying the platforms you will use to post these updates beforehand allows you to publicize where members can find your utility's data, which is a crucial part in minimizing misinformation and communicating progress crews have made. Platforms include social media, text messaging, a utility's public outage map, or a national outage map.

## 08 DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

If a storm is severe enough, plan to prepare a damage assessment for a possible FEMA claim. Many applications are available and can be set up to help utilities track broken poles, leaning poles, and other damage in real time as crew members restore power.

## 09 POST-STORM DISCUSSION

Have a post-storm discussion a few weeks after the severe weather to talk about what went well and what could be improved. This will help your utility become more efficient at restoring power to its members when the next storm occurs.

## 10 STRESS TEST

Complete a storm simulation training that includes all possible scenarios the utility may face, such as thousands of outage calls entering the OMS at once or having all employees open the GIS maps at the same time. These storm simulations can expose network flaws and speed issues that can be resolved before actual severe weather hits.



6841 POWER LANE SW  
ALEXANDRIA, MN 56308

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
BRAINERD, MN  
PERMIT NO. 472

# A Message FROM THE CEO

## NEW SPACES + NEW FACES

STAR Energy offers a wide range of services to utilities in a five-state area. To meet the demand of the utilities we serve, we are expanding. Our friends from Benco Electric Cooperative are renovating their offices in Mankato, MN, and sharing their new space with us to accommodate a new satellite office for our growing STAR family. In addition, we will be hiring for four new positions. Some of these positions offer a hybrid opportunity and can be based out of our Alexandria or Mankato office. STAR offers competitive pay and excellent benefits, flexibility, innovation, and a collaborative work environment. For more information on these career opportunities, look inside this edition of the LodeSTAR newsletter or visit our website: [www.star-energy.com/careers](http://www.star-energy.com/careers)



LOIS CROONQUIST, CEO

CONTINUE READING ON PAGE 3

READ THE LATEST  
LodeSTAR  
NEWSLETTER

Edition 25

OPEN  
HERE