

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
MEETING ON UTILITY RESILIENCE
May 11, 2021

Chair Evans, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Meek, and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon Chair Evans, Vice-Chair Lewis, Vice-Chair Meek and members of the Committee. I am John Dietz, General Manager of McMinnville Water & Light. McMinnville Water and Light is a municipal electric utility serving 17,000 customers. We are members of OMEU.

Our aim is to provide safe, reliable and affordable power. Like the IOUs, we are subject to NESC safety requirements. The NESC spells out our requirements for line clearances, which aids reliability. Vegetation management, of course, lessens impacts from catastrophic events like the recent ice storms or wildfire. A well-maintained system that meets high reliability standards is inherently more resilient.

As utilities, we are constantly evaluating risks to our systems that will impact safe and reliable operations. While we can always do more, we prioritize and stage investments over time to make sure that our power remains affordable. In McMinnville, for example, we have an emergency management plan. This is a dynamic document and with each emergency event, we are continually reviewing and updating our plan. Work products are developed from the plan to enhance resiliency. During these types of emergency events, fuel cannot be delivered due to road conditions. Our utility has issued an RFP for the design and construction of an on-site fuel station at an estimated cost of \$1.6 million to enhance our ability to respond to emergencies.

System design also plays a huge role in resiliency.

- For example, are circuits looped or radial?
- Are there ties between substations that can effectively shift load to an alternate source in the event a source is lost?
- Can the alternate source support the load at peak?
- Depending on the location, undergrounding may also make sense.

Some of the lessons that we learned in the ice storm and other similar events that the public may not appreciate are:

- The failure of communications was a big issue during the recent ice storm. For example, cell service was out and in Monmouth, the FEMA-issued radios did not work.
- Access can often delay restoration. We need to make sure conditions are safe to send our crews into (e.g. – icy roads, wind events). During the recent event, trees were falling and hazardous road conditions made access a challenge.

- Many times trees that came down were not in our right-of-ways. These trees are outside of our control as we are not authorized to trim or remove.
- It is important to remember these events are very dynamic; challenging conditions can persist and a fresh wave of events can create another fault in a section previously restored.
- As full requirements customers of BPA, if BPA is down, we are down.
- It is the little stuff that gets you . . . feeders to a house, house nobs.

I'd invite any Committee members interested in learning more to tour MWL or your local electric utility.

Thank you.