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BRMEMC Restores Widespread Outages within 48 Hours of Severe Weather

YOUNG HARRIS, Ga. — Blue Ridge Mountain EMC (BRMEMC) experienced widespread outages resulting from severe weather that rolled through our area Saturday, Jan. 11. At the peak of outages, approximately 15,000 meters were without power, 1,000 more than what was previously reported on BRMEMC's social media accounts.

After the storm passed and it was safe for BRMEMC crews to assess the damage and begin work, power restoration began. Most of the damage came from fallen trees on power lines and broken power poles. By midnight on Saturday, Jan. 11, BRMEMC had restored power to at least one-third of those meters without power, and overnight efforts continued to shrink that number to only 6,800 meters as of 6:30 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 12.

“Our SCADA system picks up outages immediately on the power grid and we begin assessing how widespread the outages are before calling in crews. Until we get ‘bird dogs’ out in the field to observe the areas, we really don’t know the degree of damage done,” said Director of Operations Fred Gray.

As daylight broke on Sunday, crews had a better view of the damage created by the severe weather. The Coopers Creek area in Union County, Ga. took a hard hit as well as the Hanging Dog area in Cherokee County, N.C. Additional assistance from Murphy Electric Power Board, Central Georgia EMC, Hart EMC, Walton EMC and Jackson EMC was requested to help in the restoration efforts.

Time is of the essence when restoring power, and crews as well as office personnel worked around the clock to complete this task. In the BRMEMC service area there are over 6,100 miles of electric distribution lines spread across mountainous terrain, which complicates restoration efforts. BRMEMC's first step was to restore power to the greatest number of people possible, which meant that we started at the substations and worked our way down main line three-phase circuits, paying particular attention to feeds with critical infrastructure attached, such as hospitals, county facilities and the like. BRMEMC then worked to repair taps leading off the

mainline circuits, and finally service lines to individual homes. Broken power poles took several hours to repair and were the most time consuming.

A final assessment of this event revealed BRMEMC had thirty-three (33) broken poles throughout the system. The total number of outages by county were as follows:

Towns: 4,045
Union: 4,876
Fannin: 2,076
Clay: 4,205
Cherokee: 5,618

While final numbers are unavailable at this time, BRMEMC expects the monetary impact from damage and repair from this event could be as much as \$750,000.

“It is often difficult for our Members to understand how a storm of relatively short duration can cause so much physical and monetary damage to the BRMEMC electric and fiber system. I cannot express my gratitude enough to the employees of BRMEMC for their hard work and perseverance during this significant outage event. I also want to offer our most sincere thanks to the crews that came from outside our area to help. Finally, I want to thank the Membership for their support and encouragement,” said General Manager Jeremy Nelms.

Within 48 hours of the severe weather coming through, BRMEMC had restored all weather-related outages on their system.

For more on Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, visit brmemc.com or follow BRMEMC on social media.

About Blue Ridge Mountain EMC

Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation is a member-owned electric cooperative headquartered in Young Harris, Georgia, serving over 53,000 member-customers in Cherokee and Clay Counties in Western North Carolina, and Towns, Union and Fannin Counties in Northeast Georgia. Organized locally in 1937, BRMEMC has invested well over \$270 million in physical infrastructure in its mission to provide reliable electric and broadband services to its members where those services would not otherwise have been available. Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

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