

Thousands in Conn. enter 2nd week without power

November 7 2011, By STEPHANIE REITZ , Associated Press

(AP) -- Tens of thousands of Connecticut residents awoke Monday as part of an unenviable fraternity: people entering their second week without power after an early-season storm that hammered the Northeast with wet, heavy snow.

The [power](#) failures, the legacy of the storm Oct. 29 and 30, were largely an unpleasant memory by Sunday night for most of the 3 million who lost power at the height of the storm. But in Connecticut, about 50,000 homes and businesses remained without [electricity](#) by Monday morning, nine days after the storm. In [Massachusetts](#), 100 customers remained without power, and New Jersey utilities said everyone was back on line.

Connecticut Light & Power, the state's largest utility, announced Sunday night that it would miss its goal of restoring power to 99 percent of its 1.2 million customers by midnight. Chief Operating Officer Jeffrey apologized, saying that power might not be restored to everyone until Wednesday. About 6,000 of the outages were new and unrelated to the snowstorm, he said.

Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has called the delays unacceptable and said the state is keeping its legal options open in case there are grounds for recourse in the courts once the circumstances are examined.

He has launched an independent probe of the utility's response to the storm outages amid numerous customer complaints, including from South Windsor fire officials, who accuse CL&P of jeopardizing safety

by failing to ensure emergency trucks had access to local roads.

"We much as we want to support and be supportive of CL&P, it's clear that for the last several days, they have failed to meet their own imposed goals on a day by day basis," Malloy said Sunday.

Attorney General George Jepsen is participating in the probe to ensure that the state, in Malloy's words, "preserves its legal options on behalf of itself and on behalf of Connecticut utility customers."

Jepsen cautioned Sunday that it was too early to know whether grounds might exist for any court action. U.S. Sens. Joe Lieberman and Richard Blumenthal also put out calls for thorough reviews of CL&P's preparedness before the storm and its response afterward, with Blumenthal describing the situation as a "historic breakdown of power and public trust."

Some people who were slogging through their eighth day Sunday without power said they would be pleasantly surprised to see their power restored Sunday night or early Monday, but they weren't optimistic.

"We're disappointed, discouraged, tired, but I don't know what else you can really say, you know," said Chet Matczak of Simsbury, an especially hard-hit suburb. "A lot of this is just the luck of the draw."

In Somers, a northern Connecticut town on the Massachusetts border, First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini said a team of highly supervised crews of minimum-security inmates from nearby state prisons had been dispatched to clear town property of trees, limbs and other debris so power restoration could move more quickly.

She said Butler, the utility president, called her personally on Saturday to apologize - which she appreciated, but which did not give her confidence

that they would have most of their power restored by Sunday night.

"(Butler) asked me how I was doing, and I said, 'Pretty lousy, but I think you're having a worse day than I am,'" Pellegrini said.

Indeed, CL&P and Butler have fielded criticism for days from many public officials and residents over a perceived lack of preparation for the storm's aftermath, particularly since the utilities had an unintended dry run when the remnants of Hurricane Irene swept through the region and knocked out power two months ago.

Some people still without power by Sunday afternoon were turning to Facebook, Twitter and email to express their frustration. A few were especially unsympathetic to Butler, who also has been without power since his generator quit last week at his home in one of the hardest-hit towns west of Hartford.

One person's reaction, posted Sunday on Facebook with a picture of Butler, read: "'Rumors that my gold-plated residential backup generator runs on the refined tears of orphan children are totally unfounded.'

Over the weekend, some towns that canceled classes all last week were preparing to reopen their schools Monday. Others in harder-hit municipalities were reviewing tree damage on bus routes, outage maps in their neighborhoods and other factors to decide whether they would be ready to reopen Monday.

Some districts also already have decided to trim their winter vacations to recoup some lost days.

Malloy said that Tuesday's Connecticut general election remained on track but that some municipalities might consolidate voting at locations with electricity if other polling places remained in the dark.

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