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PROJECT NO. 32182

PUC INVESTIGATION OF METHODS TO IMPROVE ELECTRIC AND TELECOM  
INFRASTRUCTURE THAT WILL MINIMIZE OUTAGES AND RESTORATION  
COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH GULF COAST HURRICANES

Listed below is Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative's response to the Public Utility Commission of Texas' inquiry into plans implemented to minimize long term outages and restoration costs caused by Gulf Coast hurricanes:

1. Vegetation Management Program for Overhead Facilities

Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative has the majority of its fiber optic transmission facilities underground. We have built a protected ring so that even if our aerial facilities were to be destroyed service interruptions would be held to a minimum.

Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative subscriber lines are also mostly buried. The service personnel are charged with reporting any growth within the small amount of aerial facilities. Vegetation is cleared when a problem is reported.

Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative is totally dependent upon the power provided by the local power companies. We have deployed many digital loop carriers within the Cooperative's service area. These systems have battery backups, but current technology does not prevent telecommunications outages if power is out for periods longer than one day.

Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative does have joint pole attachments with the local power companies in our service area. These attachments could provide potential problems if the local power company were to have power poles broken within some of the Cooperative's service area. Wes-Tex service personnel are charged with observing these attachments and reporting of any problems. These problems are then referred to the local power companies.

2. On-going Cyclical, Ground-based Inspection Program for Overhead Facilities.

Wes-Tex Cooperative employees inspect the Cooperative's facilities, both aerial and buried, on a regular basis. No required inspection cycle is maintained except for the Cooperative's fiber optic routes. The service personnel are required to inspect these routes weekly.