

Addison County Regional Emergency Management Committee

<https://acrpc.org/acrpc-remc/>

8 February 2023, 12:00pm

MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

Zoom and In Person at ACRPC Office, 14 Seminary St, Middlebury VT

12:00 Call to Order

Brief Introductions and Roll Call

12:05- Approval of November Minutes- did not have enough voting members to approve

12:10- Review of December Windstorm

Presentation by Michael Burke, Green Mountain Power [VP of Field Operations](#) along with Tiana Smith, GMP Head of Electrification and Sustainability and Kyle Buxton, GMP Operations Supervisor ([Slides posted](#))

Summary:

The December 22-27 windstorm started very shortly after cleanup had concluded for snowstorm the previous week.

GMP already had ~140 additional crews in the state so they were better positioned than many other utilities- they eventually brought in 180 crews

Addison County (Middlebury and Vergennes operating districts) had more storm damage events and customers without power than any other part of the state

At the peak, 60,473 customers were impacted, with GMP crews restoring power to a total of 98,934 customers.

GMP has a list of vulnerable power-dependent individuals that they attempt to restore power to first- They currently can't share that information, but they're working on a process to do that.

GMP is part of the North Atlantic Mutual Assistance Group (NAMAG) and had crews from four other states and Canada, with each district operation working as a small unitary Incident Command System

Crews have a digital application that allow them to see where other crews are working and dispatchers can send crews to the nearest locations in need.

Once power was restored, GMP crews were sent to other parts of Vermont, as well as New Hampshire and Quebec.

Additional questions can be sent to

Mike Burke (802-324-8012, Mike.Burke@GreenMountainPower.com),

Tiana Smith (802-417-9298, Tiana.Smith@GreenMountainPower.com), or

Kyle Buxton (802-349-6210, Kyle.Buxton@GreenMountainPower.com)

12:30- Discussion of December 2023 storm review from EMDs and Local Officials

Ben Marks (Cornwall) was unable to be present but sent some comments about Cornwall's response to the recent winter storm- full notes are included at the end, and some takeaways here:

- Much of Cornwall was without power for around 36 hours leading up to Christmas eve
- the Town Hall was open as a warming center for roughly the first 24 hours of the event

- Fewer than 10 Cornwall residents made use of the Cornwall warming center during the hours it was open in order to get water, use the bathroom, charge their cell phones etc.
- Once the phones and internet were down, communication out to Cornwall residents -- and among and between the Select Board members -- was difficult. The Fire Department's radios worked OK
- The morning of December 24th, the generator threw a fault and quit and we closed the warming center at that point.
- Overall the response was “just fine” but there are several issues that have come to light and need to be addressed.

Shelters were also opened in Middlebury and Orwell, with only a few families making use of them.

12:50- Additional Updates

- **Vermont Emergency Management Update** (M. Kennedy)
VEM and Middlebury reported that there were multiple, coordinated fake threats to schools around the state.
- **RPC updates** (A. L’Roe)
 - Next [SERC](#) meeting will be Feb 15
 - There are 3 Upcoming Hazardous Materials refresher trainings (Feb 15, 16, 23) being done at local fire departments
 - Tier II reporting due March 1- A. L’Roe will try to get the digital information from the state for updating the Hazard Mitigation Inventory for the county
 - Annual LEMPs updated after Town Meeting Day (March 7) and before May 1
 - Floodplain and Zoning Bylaw updates- ACRPC will be reviewing Town Plans and Zoning to identify needs for municipalities to update language in advance of FEMA updates to the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA, or 100-year floodplains). These updates will be digital, unlike our ~1985 paper versions, and much more detailed. Municipalities have to adopt certain language to remain within the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

1:20pm Meeting Adjourned

Next REMC Meeting- Wednesday, May 10, 2023
Zoom and ACRPC Office

2/8/2023 REMC Meeting Attendees:

(* = voting member, ** = voting member & proxy)

- * Valerie Capels, Bristol EMD & Town Admin
- **Sandy Korda, Orwell EMD
- **Erik Eriksen, Ripton FD & EMC
- * Tom Hanley, Middlebury EMD/PD
- * Paul McMahon, Waltham EMC
- *Bob Groff, Panton EMC

(8 voting members or proxies, representing 6 communities)

- Ethan West- Goshen Resident & Brandon FD
- Kate Rothwell- Middlebury Regional EMS
- Bill Cunningham, TriValley Transit
- Keith Ellery- Middlebury College
- Rick Christoffersen, Middlebury College
- Dave Penny- American Red Cross
- Charles Hall, American Red Cross
- Beate Ankjaer-Jensen, VT Dept of Health.
- Lt Col. Jason Galipeau, Vermont Army National Guard

- Max Kennedy, Vermont Emergency Management Regional Coordinator
- Andrew L'Roe, ACRPC Emergency Management Planner

Guest speakers:

- Tiana Smith, GMP Head of Electrification and Sustainability
- Michael Burke, GMP [VP of Field Operations](#)
- Kyle Buxton, GMP Operations Supervisor

Full notes from Ben Marks (written for Cornwall newsletter):

The second part of this update concerns the recent winter storm, which left Cornwall without power for around 36 hours leading up to Christmas eve (in some cases longer). The following is a summary that I am writing with my Emergency Manager hat on, and I am actively seeking input from town residents who either needed help and did not get it, or who were unaware of that the Town Hall was open as a warming center for roughly the first 24 hours of the event. To recap what many of you already know: a day of warm temperatures and rain on December 22, 2022, was followed by high winds and rapidly dropping temperatures. The winds blew down many trees, some into roadways and onto power lines.

A related electrical event at GMP's Salisbury substation feeding much of the town resulted in a power outage to much of Cornwall, just as temperatures were dipping into the single digits. The Cornwall Road Crew and the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department did what they could to keep the roads clear; however, for safety reasons neither workers will touch a tree that is in contact with a downed power line. I made the decision on the afternoon of December 23rd to keep the Town Hall open as a warming center. A "warming center" designation means that the Town Hall has a generator resulting in heat, light and power for that building; however, we have no cots or bedding readily available, and we keep no food supplies at the Town Hall. Sue Johnson was able to get word out via our Town email list that the Town Hall was open, and I communicated our "open" status to the state Emergency Management folks and those who run the state's "211" information service. That said, there are many Cornwall residents who are not on Sue's email list, and email communications became problematic later in the event (discussed below). Members of the Select Board and our own Sue Johnson volunteered to staff the Town Hall all night on December 23rd and several residents availed themselves of the services available there.

At roughly 10:00 pm on the night of December 23rd, we lost internet service at the Town Hall. Presumably (speculation on my part), this was the result of a loss of service by GoNetSpeed (formerly Otelco) due to the batteries in its switching stations running out of power. From this point forward, email communications between the Town and its residents was a real challenge. At around 8:00 the morning of December 24th, the generator threw a fault and quit and we closed the warming center at that point. Sue and Stu drove over to Taylor Rentals and retuned with instructions on how to restart the generator, but I decided to keep the warming center closed for the remainder of the day, as GMP's estimates of a return of electrical service were for 6:30 p.m. that evening. GMP restored electricity service for much of the town by 2:30 p.m. or so on Christmas eve, although I have heard from individual town residents that power was not restored until much later at certain locations.

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I would add that only a handful of Cornwall residents made use of the Cornwall warming center during the hours it was open in order to get water, use the bathroom, charge their cell phones etc. Fewer than 10 "customers" during the course of the night of the 23rd. We did get inquiries about whether the warming center would accept pets, and I made the spot decision to say "no" as adding domestic animals into the mix seemed like an invitation for additional complications. Once the phones and internet were down, communication out to Cornwall residents -- and among and between the Select Board members -- was difficult. The Fire Department's radios worked OK, but their involvement was pretty limited after specific trees were cleared.

All in all, I'd say it was a serious but not a prolonged situation in Cornwall. I feel like we got "our papers graded" on how well our basic emergency planning was thought out. If the power had stayed out another night, I think that Cornwall residents without a generator or backup heat source like a wood stove could have been facing frozen pipes and expensive home repairs/plumbing bills. Cornwall citizens have not yet voiced any complaints in response to my query for feedback. We did get one citizen response in which the writer expressed the opinion that our response was "just fine." I would be interested to hear from other Emergency Managers about their experiences.

Ben Marks