



CONNECTIONS **SUMMIT**

◆ ELECTRICITIES

**Customer Roundtable
Hands-On Experience**

AGENDA

- Simulation
 - Simulation exercise – table-based discussions
 - Group discussion & key takeaways
- What Next?
 - Best practices & follow-up

Simulation Introduction

Step into the shoes of real customers & utility staff in a variety of roles. Please open your WHITE envelope – the sheet enclosed will outline a public power persona you personally will represent during your table’s discussion.

Experience how different customers *think, feel, and react* during challenging utility situations—specifically a **rate increase** or an **energy emergency that requires rolling blackouts**.

Simulation Outline

There is a notetaker at each table who will document answers & facilitate questions for the group.

Please open & review the YELLOW envelope, enclosed is the simulated event that your community, Pleasantville, and your public power utility, Pleasantville Electric are experiencing.

There are 4-5 discussion questions. Answer based on the persona you are assigned, improvise and embrace your persona for the discussion.



Personas

Customers

- **Nancy:** Senior on a fixed income
- **Dustin:** Single father, working two jobs
- **Joyce & Jim:** Medicals needs, partial retirement
- **Robin:** Small business owner, downtown resident
- **Will:** Farmer
- **Erica:** Remote tech worker
- **Wheeler Family:** Busy rural family
- **Mike & Elle:** Early Adopters

Municipal Staff

- **Eddie:** Customer Service Manager
- **Max:** Customer Service Rep
- **Vickie:** Town Manager
- **Brenner:** Lineworker
- **Barbara:** Councilmember
- **Alexei:** Public Information Officer
- **Bob:** Utility Director
- **Clarke:** Rec Staff/Custodian

Workshop Notes

What did you feel?

Customers

- Angry, frustrated, inconvenienced, worried, confused
- Angry, blindsided, stressed, powerless, worried, concerned, frustrated, scared.

Utility Staff

- Nervous, overwhelmed, confused, stressed, some roles were confident in staff, others not

What impacts jumped out to you?

Customers

- Power outages can disrupt POS systems for businesses
- Damaged goods in restraint and at home due to loss of refrigeration
- Minimal impacts to some customers
- Uncomfortable at home
- Bottom line
- Disrupts communication with friends and family
- Feeling powerless

Utility Staff

- Above normal calls, hectic day, normal duties go on hold, "ruin my day", concern for family members at home
- Frustration of staff about what the day would hold (likely to affect their work)
- Frustration with leadership about not explaining the situation
- Challenge getting information from leaders in the moment

Rate increase - What questions or needs came up in the group that surprised you?

Customers

- When will we see actual system improvements,
- Is the increase in base charge or usage based,
- Show me programs and resources
- Why weren't we told earlier

Utility Staff

- Can we change anything
- Social media is going nuts
- Lineworkers getting questions in the field
- What does this rate increase buy? How do we explain that to customers?

Energy Emergency - What questions or needs came up in the group that surprised you?

Customers

- Importance of “when” will it affect me
- Concerns for loss of business for small businesses
- Concerns for livestock and pets at home
- “bull”
- What are the grid constraints?
- Concerns for having to run generators and increased unplanned O&M costs
- Nice to know the duration of the outage but want to know when they will be personally affected by the rolling blackout

Utility Staff

- Do I have talking points to explain why to customers,
- How long will this continue, what is the backup plan if it doesn't come back on, is the whole town out.

Do you foresee that your community has a strategy to meet the needs of all these stakeholders?

Rate Increase

- It wasn't consistent across all departments
- Translating technical cost drivers to something a customer can easily understand needs consideration and time

Energy Emergency

- It wasn't consistent that all departments were prepared
- Customers noted they'd reach out police – are they informed?
- Impacts to overnight call center

Any additional comments or takeaways?

Rate Increase

- Will look to AI, Google, Facebook groups, friends and elected officials for more information
- Facing challenges around household as well (teens at home, cost of medicine, etc.)

Energy Emergency

- Helpful to consider the different impacts depending on the role
- Customer interest in detailed information in an emergency is a challenge

Takeaways for Action

- What has your community done in the past to help recognize the variety of impacts we can have on customers?
- What about to help staff at various levels be “informed”?
- What else can we prepare today, that will assist?

Rate increase – Things you may have heard at your table

Customer perspective

How much?

What's the impact to my budget?

How can I offset the increase?

Staff perspective

Where do I get information?

How do we handle the call increase?

Is there some good news to mix in?

Do we (staff) all have the same general message?

Rate increase – Strategies you may have heard at your table

Utility actions

Calculate the average residential bill impact

Implement new rates in shoulder months

Spread increases over multi-year period

Refresh staff knowledge regarding efficiency tips

Use newsletters and bill inserts related to extreme weather prep

Provide standard messaging for all customer facing staff

Rate increase – Tried and true strategies

1. Succinctly identify what is causing the need for a rate increase and ensure all staff and elected officials are aware.
2. Consider phasing rate increases over time, when appropriate.
Establish multi-year plans
3. Engage with stakeholders early
4. Understand necessary regulatory procedures
5. Communicate clearly and transparently – in as many ways & places as reasonable
6. Offer or identify partners for assistance programs & promote energy efficiency services and best practices
7. Evaluate & monitor for unintended impacts



Rate increase – Staff to consider when planning

The staff audience is broad – especially if your staff are out in the community:

- Customer service representatives & staff

- Key Account Representatives

- City Manager and administration

- Line workers (field crews)

- Elected officials

- Public information officers

- Public safety leaders (more so with EEA impact)

- After hours call team (EEA) OR any other “often overlooked” staff

Energy Emergency Alerts

- **Energy Emergency Alerts are a much newer utility procedure for public power**
 - Operational template available via the ElectriCities Operations portal, intended to be locally customized
 - Sample messaging available on the Value of Public Power Dashboard
 - Ongoing & continued conversation to be had as we learn from experiences in this space

Follow-up questions or to request workshop personas and scenarios:

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