

**Fire and Emergency Services – Newfoundland and Labrador, and  
Emergency Management Partners De-briefing Blackout 2014  
Provincial Emergency Operations Centre - St. John's  
February 6, 2014**

**Participating Emergency Management Partners**

Fire and Emergency Services–NL (FES-NL)  
Department of Health and Community Services  
Department of Advanced Education and Skills  
Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs  
Newfoundland Power  
Newfoundland & Labrador Hydro  
Bell Aliant  
Royal Newfoundland Constabulary  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Eastern Regional Health Authority  
Central Regional Health Authority  
Western Regional Health Authority  
Labrador Grenfell Regional Health Authority  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
City of St. John's  
Canadian Red Cross  
Public Safety Canada

**De-briefing Overview**

FES-NL thanked everyone for taking the time today to participate in the de-briefing session. The format that was followed for this meeting included:

- *What Went Well;*
- *Areas for Improvement;*
- *Lessons Learned/Other Observations;* and
- *Recommendations/After Action Items.*

The reporting order was the same as the briefings held during the event. At the last briefing session FES-NL advised that this de-briefing session would be taking place and encouraged its emergency management (EM) partners to undertake their own internal de-briefings. This in turn would assist in this overall EM partner debriefing.

**Chronological Overview of Events**

The circumstance that came up in early January 2014 was the result of a confluence of events that occurred. The rolling blackouts, the fire at the NL Hydro (NLH) Sunnyside facility, the switch issue at the NLH Holyrood thermal generating station, the challenges with the extreme cold temperatures and blizzard conditions combined produced difficult circumstances. The priority through the management of these circumstances was to get the power back on, to ensure public/utility worker safety and the promotion of energy conservation. Further detailed information provided by both Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Newfoundland Power can be found on the Public Utilities Board website at:  
<http://www.pub.nl.ca/applications/IslandInterconnectedSystem/InformationReports.htm>

<http://www.pub.nl.ca/applications/IslandInterconnectedSystem/InterimReports.HTM>

#### *Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (NLH) Overview*

NLH took the opportunity to briefly review the events that occurred in early January 2014. At this time NLH was experiencing issues related to a reduced generation capacity (200 MW) and combined with the extreme weather conditions forecasted for the province they began discussions with Newfoundland Power (NP) and a plan was devised to introduce and alert the public of the potential for rolling blackouts. NLH also explained the impacts to electrical transmission that resulted from the fire incident at their Sunnyside facility (JAN 04 14) and the loss of generation capability at the Holyrood thermal generating station (JAN 05 14) as a result of an issue with a switch in their yard.

#### *Newfoundland Power (NP) Overview*

NP took the opportunity to briefly outline the issues/challenges with respect to generation supply and peak loading on the electrical system during the early January 2014 time period. Based on their communications with NLH, they prepared for the possibility of rolling blackouts beginning the evening of January 2, 2014. Due to generation supply shortages, rotating power outages were necessary on 5 occasions throughout the January 2 to 8, 2014 period. These rotating outages affected between 5,000 and 30,000 customers and generally were less than 1 hour in duration. Customers on the Avalon Peninsula were most affected by the rolling blackouts.

The NLH system equipment failure events at Sunnyside (January 4) and at Holyrood (January 5) caused major impacts on NP's ability to distribute power to its customers. These events caused wide spread power outages throughout the island affecting up to 190,000 customers with some customers without power for up to 36 hours. The phenomena of 'cold load pick up' was discussed, which refers to the process involved when you bring customers back on line after a long power outage and during extreme weather conditions and the challenges these high loads present during the process.

NP followed their emergency response procedures to prepare for and respond to the power outage events and to communicate with customers on the status of outages and the need to conserve energy throughout these power outage events.

#### *Fire and Emergency Services-NL (FES-NL) Overview*

FES-NL took the opportunity to review the events that unfolded during the early January time period. FES-NL was kept apprised of the ongoing challenges that both NLH and NP were facing with diminished generation capacity, expected high demand due to the weather conditions, and the potential need to institute rolling blackouts on January 2 and 3, 2014. Once the fire at NLH Sunnyside site occurred and the subsequent widespread loss of power was identified, FES-NL commenced with its own operational actions – activation of the provincial emergency operations centre (EOC), notification and provision of information to EM partners, and direct meetings with NLH and NP.

The provincial EOC was activated at 1300 hours on January 4, 2014 and this was shared with our EM partners and requests made for representatives to be available for provincial EOC briefings to be identified.

Between January 4 and 10, 2014, daily operational briefings were conducted at the provincial EOC which provided for a centralized point for sharing of critical information, collectively plan for next steps and a forum for problem solving among all EM partners.

#### **What Went Well**

In emergency management response and recovery activities it is important to recognize that despite the challenging conditions brought on by an adverse event, there are positives that occur as a result of

preventative and mitigative undertakings, and emergency preparedness and planning activities. This section will provide a collective response from EM partners:

- Good communication and information sharing between the utility companies, emergency management partners and with the public.
- Use of multiple platforms to provide information and updates – direct communications, operational briefings, traditional media and social media.
- Provincial Emergency Operations Centre activation provided for a centralized point for operational briefings, sharing of critical information, collective planning for next steps and a forum for problem solving.
- Municipalities activated their own municipal emergency management plans and took the necessary steps to assist their residents.
- Collaborative efforts to provide consistent messaging on public safety and energy conservation.

### **Areas for Improvement**

As a result of responding to and recovering from any adverse event, EM partners do identify areas in their existing emergency management plans, contingency plans, business continuity plans and/or standard operating procedures that need improvement. This section will provide a collective response from EM partners:

- FES-NL and all emergency management partners will take the opportunity to revisit their emergency management plans and processes to enhance and update their levels of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Ongoing reviews of emergency management plans is a “best practice” that FES-NL, emergency management partners and local governments need to undertake. This will ensure that these emergency management plans are current with up to date information.
- Collectively, the need was identified to have a better understanding of key critical infrastructure providers, in this specific event namely the utility companies and fuel suppliers, and how these systems have strategic interdependencies. This will better inform FES-NL, its emergency management partners, local governments and the public on how to prepare for, respond to and recover from adverse events.

### **Lessons Learned/Other Observations**

As many EM partners work from an all hazards emergency management plan template, with their own hazard identification and risk analysis, there are inevitably situations that arise with any adverse event that will lead to lessons learned. These observations are noted based on how the incident presents itself and unfolds over time. Although adverse events can have a similar genesis, the subsequent consequences and impacts can vary from event to event. Additionally, as emergency management plans are updated based

on previous adverse events a revised process or procedure may need to be adapted given the new set of circumstances. This section will provide a collective response from EM partners:

- We all have a role to play when it comes to being prepared for adverse events. All levels of government need to ensure that their own emergency management plans are up to date and those relationships with other emergency management partners are established and maintained.
- Individuals are encouraged to have a plan to deal with emergencies that affect them in their homes – the 72 Hours campaign at [www.getprepared.ca](http://www.getprepared.ca) is the nationally recognized resource used to guide individuals through this process. *Know the Risk. Make a Plan. Get a Kit.*
- Timely communications and the sharing of information remain a vital component of successful emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities.

### **Recommendations/After Action Items**

Each EM partner is advised to continue working on their Areas for Improvement and to incorporate Lessons Learned as they continue to develop and enhance their own emergency management plans. FES-NL, through the provincial emergency management plan and the associated committee, will continue to work with its EM partners to ensure that as a collective there is ongoing work to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to and recover from future adverse events. Opportunities will be found in ongoing emergency management training courses, emergency exercise initiatives and further collaborative engagement of the EM partners.