



March 2020 ATVG Newsletter

TVA Helping Their Neighbors Stay #TennesseeStrong

On March 5, 2020, deadly tornadoes roared through Middle Tennessee in the early hours of Tuesday morning. The storms left a path of destruction 50 miles long across Davidson, Wilson and Smith counties. A larger, more intense tornado continued and caused extensive damage in Putnam County where winds reached 175 mph; 24 people are confirmed dead with dozens missing and thousands displaced from their homes and businesses.

TVA crews began assessing damage and safely restoring delivery points with local power companies almost immediately. At first count, 38 high-voltage electrical transmission towers were damaged with 17 lines down, including one across Interstate 40 in Wilson County, four across other roads and three lines down across the Cumberland River. Navigation on the river was re-routed as TVA worked to remove the lines from the water.

Almost all electrical delivery points with the local power companies were restored within a matter of hours. TVA crews continue working with local power companies to repair hundreds of broken poles and downed lines to restore power to their customers. Thousands still remain without power across Middle Tennessee in some remote areas.

“We appreciate all the TVA and local power company employees who are on the ground working on restoration efforts,” said Doug Bailey, vice president of Field Operations. “As always, even as we work to restore power to affected areas, our overriding priority is the safety of our people, our partners and the public we serve.”

As the recovery and restoration efforts continue to the transmission infrastructure, TVA employees are also turning their attention to helping those in need. Teams of TVA employees are gathering resources to support disaster relief efforts and will be volunteering in affected communities.

“We want our neighbors across Middle Tennessee to know that they are not alone, and TVA and its staff will be there as their communities begin to recover from this tragic event,” said Jeannette Mills, TVA Executive Vice President and Chief External Relations Officer. “TVA employees’ immediate response was asking how they can help really shows that their spirit of service to the people of the Tennessee Valley extends well beyond work hours.”

“Safety is the center of all we do at TVA and natural disasters are a reminder that the best defense is often a good offense. We encourage the 10 million people we serve across the Valley to review their family’s plans in the event of a tornado or other natural disaster,” stated Ms. Mills.

Universities Contract for Renewables in Sustainability Push

Vanderbilt University and the College of William & Mary, in separate announcements in January, became two more of a steadily growing number of U.S. colleges and universities to obtain at least a portion of their campus energy needs through long-term power purchase agreements for electricity from renewable resources.

In some ways, colleges and universities are like any other corporate purchaser of energy looking for a stable, affordable supply that can contribute to the organization's sustainability goals. However, colleges and universities have additional constituencies and motivations to satisfy.

"The X factor is, obviously, the students," said Kyle Harrison, sustainability analyst at BloombergNEF. "Students have been really excited about their universities going to 100% renewable electricity," said Bronte Payne, the "Go Solar" campaign director at advocacy group Environment America.

Students, for example, have pressured some colleges and universities in the U.S. and elsewhere to halt new investments in companies associated with fossil fuels and to divest existing holdings. The Association of Big Ten Students, representing students and alumni at the 14 Big Ten schools, in January passed a resolution calling on their schools to divest their fossil fuel interests. In September 2019, the University of California's investments office said it would divest fossil fuel holdings in both its endowment and pensions, calling fossil fuel assets a "financial risk."

More generally, colleges and universities see purchases of renewable energy as one way to help further their greenhouse gas emissions-reduction, carbon-neutrality or zero-carbon pledges. The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education said in a February 2018 publication that power purchase agreements for the output of offsite renewable resources, either for individual schools or for multiple purchasers aggregated together, is the most effective way for colleges and universities to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. In an April 2019 report, Environment America, said more than 40 U.S. colleges and universities get all of their electricity supply from renewable resources.

Tennessee Attorney General: No Problem with Knox County School System Offices Moving Into TVA Tower

The Knox County School System will not cede any authority when it moves its offices into the federally owned Tennessee Valley Authority East Tower, the state attorney general said. "I am pleased with the State Attorney General's opinion on this matter," Mayor Glenn Jacobs said in a statement. "This removes the last obstacle before finalizing the transition into the TVA East Tower from the Andrew Johnson Building." The county's agreement with TVA will move the school system offices into the bottom six floors of the East Tower while the University of Tennessee leases the top six floors from the county.

TVA: Almost \$1 Billion in Flooding Damages Avoided

The Tennessee Valley Authority says nearly \$1 billion in damages were averted in February thanks to river system management. February was one of the wettest in recorded history, forcing TVA to manage massive increases in water volumes at dams across the state. TVA said \$1 million in damages were averted in Elizabethton, \$65.4 million in Lenoir City and \$110 million in Clinton. Some areas are still recovering, but the flooding would've been much worse without TVA's system of dams and management of the river system.

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ATVG is a 501(c) (4), not-for-profit,
public interest organization.

ATVG advocates for the interests of county
and city/town governments residing within the
seven-state TVA region and their partners
in the public and private sectors.

*For details about ATVG's mission
and program of work,
visit us on line at: www.atvg.org*

TVA Donates STEM Funds to Area Schools

It may at first look like playtime, but some Charleston Elementary School of Cleveland, TN students are getting a hands-on introduction to the STEM field thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

TVA rolled out a company-wide \$600,000 grant program to fund the purchase of STEM equipment at schools across the state. At Charleston Elementary, that took the shape of work tables where students could build using blocks and program small toy trains using an iPad.

Denise George, library specialist at Charleston Elementary, runs an after-school robotics program for fourth-grade students. She said it's important to get students with the potential for STEM careers interested early to fully develop those skills. At this age, that's done through play.

"They're learning coding skills, engineering design skills, on another table they have to master measurement while building a track and on this one they need to get the right trajectory to knock the blocks down," she said. She added that having this equipment available for Charleston students creates equal access to STEM learning for all pupils.

"When kids come to school, they come in at all different levels. And here (at Charleston) a lot of kids come from a low-income background. So they come in not really reading or ready to read," she said. "With the donation that TVA has given us, I can engage them and interest them. It gives us that push forward that will help them want to read and that will help them be successful."

Charleston Elementary worked for four years to become a designated K-5 STEAM academy, including the Arts in the well-known STEM acronym. George said they achieved the STEAM designation in 2019, and this equipment builds on that accomplishment.

Principal Dr. Candice Belt said offering this opportunity to students is vital to get them thinking about a range of careers at an early age, granting lots of time for them to realize their full potential and personal talents. "This equipment gets them connected and learning through hands-on opportunities for students," Belt said. "We want them to get engaged and excited about learning as early as possible, and this lets them explore. And so, if we can get them to that point, if we can get them to think of learning in that way as early as possible, then the sky's the limit."

TVA's Malinda Hunter, with a team of representatives from both BPI and TVA, presented checks ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to five schools, including Candy's Creek Cherokee Elementary, Park View Elementary, Brainerd High School and Heritage Middle School. Hunter shared the same sentiment as George and Belt. She said TVA is invested in bringing up a new generation of STEM-minded students for the future workforce.

Tennessee Lawmakers Object to President's Proposal to Sell TVA Transmission Assets

"Proposals to sell TVA's assets undermine the utility's credit, threaten to raise interest rates on the agency's debt, and discourage investment which is harmful to the 9 million ratepayers that we represent," the Tennessee lawmakers wrote in their letter to the president. "The transmission assets that the budget request proposes to sell have been paid for by TVA ratepayers, not by federal taxpayers. Forcing TVA to sell these assets would severely hamper TVA's ability to serve businesses and families in Tennessee. Further, TVA does not receive any federal taxpayer subsidies or federal appropriations, and federal taxpayers are not on the hook for the utility's debt."

The letter praised TVA for helping to create and retain nearly 500,000 jobs and encourage more than \$55 billion of new capital investment in its 7-state region since 2013 due to what the lawmakers said was TVA's "outstanding" power reliability favorable electric rates.

"TVA's ability to provide reliable, affordable power is essential to the TVA region's families and businesses," the lawmakers said in their letter.

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Tennessee Slowly Sifts Through Tornado Wreckage

Communities across Middle Tennessee are continuing recovery efforts in the aftermath of the deadly tornados that swept through Benton, Davidson, Putnam and Wilson counties in the early morning hours of March 3rd, leveling homes and businesses, snapping trees and hundreds of utility poles. More than 150 people were transported to area hospitals on Tuesday night and as of Wednesday morning, about 40,000 Tennessee residents lacked power.

The largest number of fatalities was in Putnam County, where 18 people died; some victims as young as 3 and 4 years old. As of Wednesday afternoon, three people were missing or unaccounted for in Putnam County. "We ask that you please keep those families in your prayers," Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter told reporters during a press conference. The National Weather Service (NWS) crews continued to survey damage in Putnam, Davidson, Wilson and Smith counties. NWS confirmed areas in Donelson experienced winds moving at 165 miles per hour.

Nashville Mayor John Cooper said, "Crews are still working to clear roads and restore the power. Nashville's drinking water remains clean and safe." Nashville Fire Department Chief William Swann said the number of residents displaced is "huge." Emergency personnel logged a volume of more than 400 calls and transported nearly 200 people in response to the tornado. The Nashville Fire Department reported about 48 buildings collapsed or were destroyed by the tornado.

Nashville Electric Service officials expect power to be restored to most residents in approximately a week. NES reported about 600 broken poles from this storm, significantly higher than the 200 poles after a tornado in 1998. In the Nashville area, the majority of outages were in the North Nashville, East Nashville, Hendersonville and Donelson neighborhoods. At the John C. Tune Airport the terminal and more than a dozen hangars were damaged from the tornado and officials estimate infrastructure repair costs will reach \$93 million.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) transmission crews and operators from local power companies continue working to restore power to thousands of Middle Tennesseans. Thirty-five high-voltage electrical transmission towers were damaged and 17 lines were down, including one across Interstate 40 and three across the Cumberland River, utility officials said. Rebuilding the lines will take a number of days depending on the weather.

Nashville Electric Service personnel have been working tirelessly to restore power to nearly 28,800 Nashville residents, "It will be quite possibly a couple of months (before all the power poles are replaced), but customers won't be out anywhere near that long," Jack Baxter, NES vice president of operations, said.

"We're doing what we need to do today to get power restored to customers. We're doing some things that are temporary that we'll have to go back later and make permanent fixes. It will be a couple of months, fixing all of the damage." An additional 400 contract line workers are assisting NES crews, doubling its total workforce, Baxter said. Most traveled from Kentucky, West Virginia and other parts of Tennessee.

Surveyors with the National Weather Service in Nashville have confirmed at least 50.25 miles of damage from the Tuesday morning storms were caused by the same tornado in Davidson, Wilson and Smith counties.

The long path, which is subject to change as surveys of the damage continue, is believed to have started with a touchdown somewhere near John C. Tune Airport in Davidson County and ended 3.5 miles west of Gordonsville in Smith County.

Association of Tennessee Valley Governments
Spring Meeting April 15, 2020

Important Update: Meeting Cancellation

After discussions with the ATVG Board Executive Committee and several Board members the decision has been made to cancel the ATVG meeting scheduled for April 15 in Tunica. Several factors contributed to this decision:

1. The unknown status of COVID-19 over the next eight weeks and beyond and the CDC's guidance with which we are all familiar;
2. The fact that TVA is currently not allowing its employees to attend any meetings involving more than 15 participants so TVA's involvement is in doubt;
3. Many local government officials are overly preoccupied in addressing the serious issues associated with prevention of the spread of the virus.

In discussions with the Gold Strike Resort we have committed to having a meeting at Gold Strike in 2021.

In discussions with TVA, its May 7 Board meeting in Murray, KY is still planned as scheduled and ATVG remains committed to hosting a reception for the Board and TVA leadership officials on May 6. If this event is not postponed, we will have a private dinner following this reception for all ATVG members in attendance. Also, we will plan for some additional activities for our July meeting in Huntsville.

For Coronavirus: TVA's Commitment; Message from Jeff Lyash, TVA President & CEO go to www.tva.gov

Everyone stay healthy and safe!!

Mike Arms

ATVG Executive Director

