



Outage Communications from the Customer Service Desk

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Introduction

- About Me
 - Marketing & Customer Care Manager
 - Been with SELCO for 10+ years
- About Shrewsbury Electric & Cable Operations
 - Electric Established 1908, Cable Established 1983
 - Electric, Cable, Internet & Telephone
 - Approx. 14,500 Electric; 12,000 Cable, 10,000 Internet, 3,800 Phone

An aerial satellite-style photograph of a tropical storm. The storm's eye is visible as a bright white circle in the center, surrounded by a dense, swirling ring of dark grey and black clouds. The surrounding ocean is a deep blue, with some white-capped waves visible. The overall scene is dramatic and powerful.

Before the Outage

STORM PREPARATION

Management Planning Session

- Timeline of Storm & Expected Impacts
- Operational Preparations
 - Review of Stock, Available Personnel & Equipment
 - Contractors Retained (e.g. tree removal)
 - Available Mutual Aid If Necessary
- Customer Service Preparations
 - Staffing Plan & Hours



During the Outage

CUSTOMER TO OFFICE COMMUNICATION

What We Do

- Answer the Phone & Talk to a LOT of People
- Report Outages to Operations Staff
- Give Updates to Repeat Callers
- Deescalate Angry Customers
- Unofficial Roles:
 - Psychiatrist
 - Shoulder to Cry On
 - Punching Bag



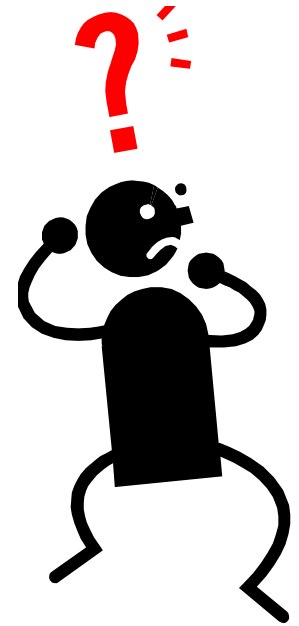
Frequent Call Types

- Reporting Outages & Lines Down
- Just “Checking In” on Progress
- Left Town, Wants to Know if Power is On
- Cold Weather Questions:
 - Shelter Information
 - Expected Repair Time
 - Should I Leave?



What Customers Want to Know

- What's going on?
 - When will I get my power back?
 - What happened?
 - Are you working on it?
 - Is it going to take a long time?
- If you can't answer at least some of these questions their anxiety increases.



Customer Mood

- Did you know...

There is only one letter difference between the word

OUTAGE

and the word

OUTRAGE

Customer Mood

- First Day
 - Most interactions are supportive and informative.
 - Customer mood dependent on what time of day outage began and severity of storm.
- Second Day
 - Morning:
 - “Do you think we’ll be back on today?”
 - Repeat callers looking for updates.
 - Understanding customers now becoming impatient.
 - Evening (approaching another night without power):
 - Families with kids & elderly starting to panic.
 - Impatience turning to anger in some customers.
 - Beginning of abusive and inappropriate interactions. Threats begin.



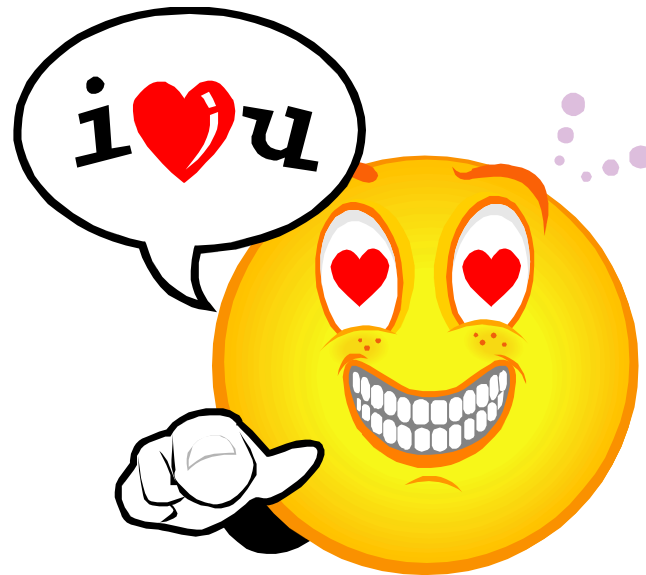
Customer Mood

- Third Day
 - Anger growing to outrage among some.
 - Even understanding customers become exasperated and frustrated if no updated information is available.
 - Threats and abusive language are common.
 - Panic continues to grow among all customer demographics.
 - Demands for restoration estimates and bill credits begin.
- Fourth Day & Beyond...
 - Outrage palpable.
 - Demands for restoration estimates constant.
 - Accusations of incompetence and negligence.
 - Frequent threats of reporting the utility to authorities.



Customer Mood

- After the outage is over they love us again!



Indignant Customers

- “I pay my taxes/bills!”
- “You always fix the rich/poor/town employee neighborhoods first, that’s discrimination!”
- “Stop stealing power from my neighborhood, we have underground lines!”
- “I haven’t seen a truck all day. Are you hiding in the garage?”

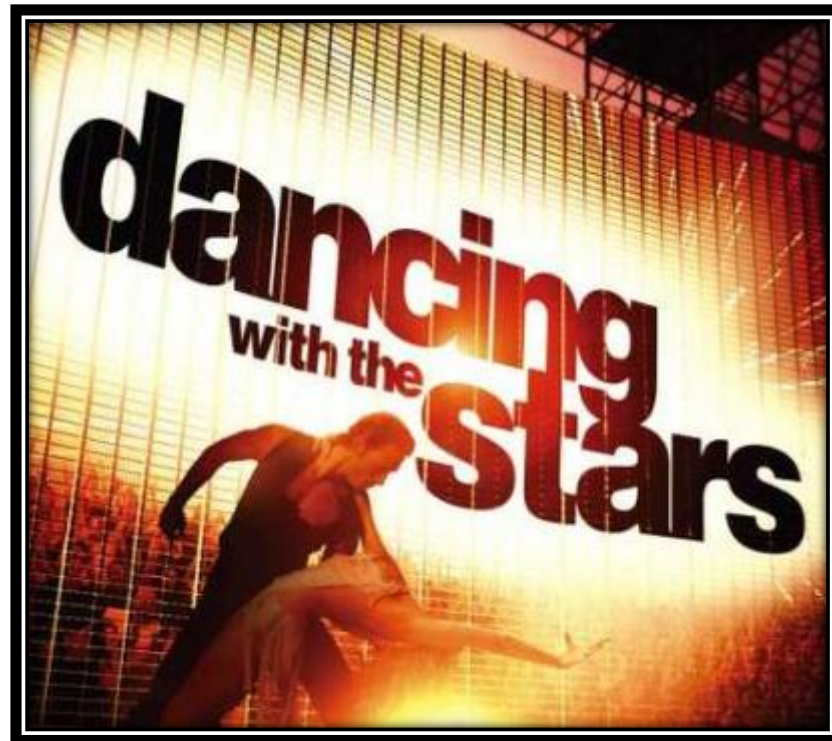
Weird & Wacky

- “Help, my TV stopped working!” (um... you have no power)
- “Can you tell me when you expect the power to go out and how long it will take for you to get it back on?”
- From a Restaurant: “Is the food in our fridge safe to serve?”
- “I only care about my house...”
- “Do you have a cell phone charging station?”



Weird & Wacky

- Why did they replace “*Dancing with the Stars*” with news coverage of the storm?!?!?!?



Common Threats

- I'm Going to Report the Utility to the:
 - Town Manager
 - Elected Officials
 - Better Business Bureau
 - State/Attorney General/DPU
- Swearing, Belittling, Berating, Verbal Abuse
- Threats of Physical Violence



Non-Electric Calls

- Cable Outages
 - Response Depends on Phase of Recovery
 - Electric Outages Take Priority
- Shelter Information
- Yard Waste Pickup (ALB)
- Tree/Highway Issues
- Fire & Police



A utility truck with a bucket lift is working on a power line in a residential area. The truck is white and has "T.M.L.P." written on its side. The bucket lift is extended high into the air, and a worker is visible in the bucket. The background shows trees with autumn foliage and a house. The ground is covered in snow. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid.

During the Outage

OFFICE TO FIELD COMMUNICATION

Keep It Simple

- Electric Outage Reporting
 - Outage Management System
 - Backup Plan if System Fails (Paper Slips)
- Phone for Special Incidents
 - Dangerous Situations
 - Police/Fire Involvement
- Cable Outages Reported Separately





During the Outage

FIELD TO OFFICE COMMUNICATION

What We Need to Know

- Extent of Outages
 - Geographic Areas
 - Number of Homes Impacted
 - Severity of Damage
- Progress Made & General Plan
 - Mutual Aid & Number of Crews
 - What's Been Fixed So Far
 - Where Crews are Working Now
 - Where Crews are Going Next



Why Do We Need to Know?

- Having Answers Helps Us Deal With Angry Customers
- Builds Goodwill & Confidence in Utility
- Demonstrates Utility's Ability to Manage Situation
- Reduces Repeat Calls
- Provides Info. for Frequent Press Updates
- Boosts Office Employee Morale

Why Do We Need to Know?

- When people don't know what's going on they make up their own story to explain what they think is happening.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue collared shirt, is smiling and speaking into several microphones. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid.

During the Outage

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

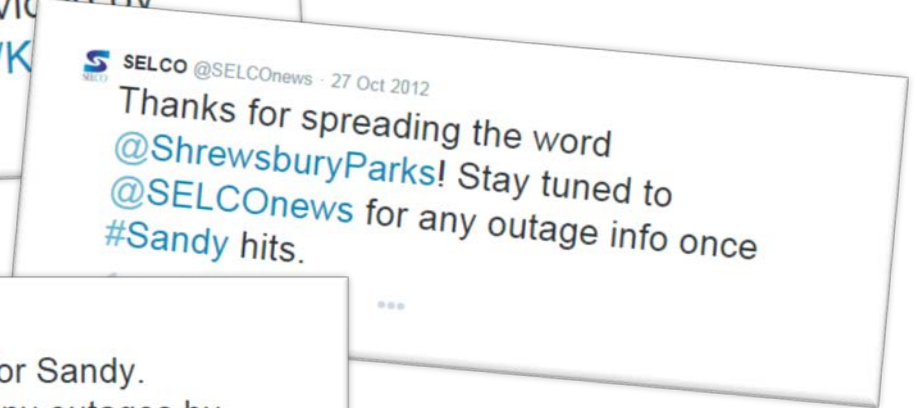
From Designated Managers not CSRs

- Official Statements
- Press Releases & Interviews
- Emergency Operations Center Updates
- Code Red Messaging
- Twitter Updates



Social Media Examples


- Before the storm



Social Media Examples

- During the storm

 SELCO @SELCOnews · 29 Oct 2012
Calls are starting to come in for outages. We are assessing the situation as it unfolds. Report outages to 508-841-8500.

 SELCO @SELCOnews · 29 Oct 2012
There are currently about 550 homes without power. The damage is geographically widespread throughout town.

 SELCO @SELCOnews · 29 Oct 2012
Edgemere restored except three homes on Lakeside where there are two poles down.

 SELCO @SELCOnews · 29 Oct 2012
Colton/Surrey/Westwood/Westmont/Gage are back up for power. Still out for cable, but we're working on it.

Social Media Examples

- Cleanup and Completion



SELCO @SELCOnews · 29 Oct 2012

Looks like we're down to just a few homes without power (approximately 4 or 5). We have about 300 without cable, ... fb.me/1O3phpPjs



SELCO @SELCOnews · 30 Oct 2012

Morning Update: About 20 people remain without cable. 2 homes are without power and one business has 2/3 power. Working on all this morning.



SELCO @SELCOnews · 30 Oct 2012

The last 20 homes without cable were restored about an hour ago. All cable and electric has been restored.





After the Outage

MANAGEMENT TEAM DEBRIEFING

Review of Incident

- Remaining Operational Issues & Cleanup
- Dissect Communications and Operations
 - What else do we need next time?
 - What could have been better?
 - What went right?
 - Lessons learned?



Thinking Ahead

IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN



Be Proactive BEFORE an Outage

- What kind of regular communications will head off potential problems during an outage?
 - Updates to Office
 - Scheduled Press Updates (e.g. every 4 hours)
 - Twitter Updates
- Who will be responsible for each communication?
- How will each communication be used?
 - Internal information only?
 - For public release?
 - CSRs, press, Twitter, etc.





QUESTIONS?