

NEWS RELEASE
MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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PSC to Recognize Montana Line Crews for Sandy Aid

HELENA — When Montana lineman Mark Brastrup learned that Superstorm Sandy had delivered a staggering blow to the East Coast’s electrical grid, he said goodbye to his wife and four children and went to work.

After three weeks of working 16-to-18-hour shifts with no days off to help restore power in impacted areas, the 36-year-old Joliet resident and more than 40 fellow Montana line workers with Par Electrical Contractors returned home in late November.

The Montana Public Service Commission, PSC, is recognizing the line workers at 9:30 a.m. Thursday at the Commission, 1701 Prospect Ave., in Helena.

Commissioner Bill Gallagher, who spearheaded the recognition effort, has prepared a resolution thanking and acknowledging the Montana line workers and companies that participated in the relief effort. Gallagher plans to read the resolution during Thursday’s meeting.

Par workers as well as representatives from NorthWestern Energy and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, IBEW, plan to attend the meeting. The public is encouraged to attend.

“My son is an IBEW Lineman who served in the Sandy Relief effort. I see first-hand their sacrifice and dedication to helping keep others safe, lighted, and warm when Mother Nature acts up,” Commissioner Gallagher said. “These Linemen ‘storm soldiers’ are amazing men; tireless, hard-working and resourceful – Heroes to those without power after a storm like Sandy.”

Gallagher said he organized the meeting to formally recognize these line workers before the PSC, but also to give all Montanans an opportunity to say thanks.

“Like most heroes, they typically avoid attention, but they deserve our recognition, respect and gratitude for their work,” he said.

During Thursday’s meeting, Brastrup and other Par representatives will give the Commission an account of their work in Ohio and New Jersey and present a slide show of photographs taken on the job.

In all, 42 Par linemen, apprentices and ground workers responded in late October through an agreement with NorthWestern Energy, which temporarily released the contractor from its duties in Montana to provide mutual aid in eastern states impacted by the storm.

After being released by the utility, Brastrup mobilized nine crews that traveled east from Montana in 32 pickup trucks, line trucks and bucket trucks.

Employees with Par, a subsidiary of Quanta Services Company, have traveled to areas in the West to provide mutual aid, but the Sandy response is among the most extensive for Montana line crews, Brastrup said.

“It’s the largest amount of crews I’ve taken on a storm,” he said. “It’s a pretty intense process when you’re mobilizing this many guys.”

The Par team first traveled to Cleveland, Ohio, where they spent three days assisting FirstEnergy line crews working to restore residential service. They found more extensive damage in New Jersey.

“New Jersey was definitely hit worse,” Brastrup said. “We ran into roads closed and power lines down and we had a heck of a time getting into where they wanted us to start the first night.”

When they finally arrived at their destination in New Jersey, they found over 1,000 linemen gathered at a makeshift camp.

“Most people were just amazed that we came that far,” Brastrup said.

While repairing lines one evening in Cleveland, Par crews were greeted with cheering and applause after restoring power to a residential neighborhood.

“People were clapping and just happy when we turned on the lights,” Brastrup said. “It’s just what we do.”

For more information, contact PSC Communications/Research Director Justin Post at 406.444.6171. Follow the PSC at [Twitter.com/@MT_PSC](https://twitter.com/MT_PSC) or visit [Facebook.com/MontanaPSC](https://facebook.com/MontanaPSC).