

1 **Q. Provide a detailed explanation of the communications that occurred with customers**
 2 **on the rotating power outages that occurred in December 2013 and January 2014.**
 3 **Include in the reply the number of customer inquiries to Newfoundland Power's**
 4 **customer contact center, website and social media.**

5
 6 **A. 1. Introduction**

7
 8 ***General***

9 Newfoundland Power communicates with its customers by a variety of means. They
 10 include telephonic, digital and mass media based communications. The Company's
 11 operational processes aim to ensure that information provided to customers is
 12 responsive, accurate and timely, regardless of the customer's choice of
 13 communication channel.

14
 15 Newfoundland Power's operational processes evolve as customers' expectations
 16 evolve. Major electrical system outages are a critical test of Newfoundland Power's
 17 customer service capabilities. The Company's customer communications
 18 performance in the period January 2-8, 2014 was improved as a result of changes
 19 made during 2013 to the Company's operational processes largely as a response to
 20 the electrical system events on January 11-13, 2013.¹

21
 22 ***2013 Customer Communications Improvements***

23 Following January 2013, Newfoundland Power reassessed some key aspects of its
 24 customer service response in major electrical system outages. This reassessment
 25 resulted in changes to customer communication technology, overall outage response
 26 processes, and human resource deployment.

27
 28 Following the January 2013 outage, Newfoundland Power's call centre phone
 29 capacity was increased by over 25%.² Newfoundland Power deployed upgrades to its
 30 website to permit improved customer access to outage related information.³ In
 31 addition, improvements were made to permit mobile phone users quicker access to
 32 website outage information.⁴

¹ On January 11-12, 2013, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's ("Hydro") Holyrood Thermal Generation Station was unavailable for 21 hours. The reinstatement of electrical service to Newfoundland Power's customers following this outage was not concluded until January 13th, 2013.

² This contributed to a reduction in busy signals received by customers during the January 2-8, 2014 period by ½ compared to those received by customers during the January 11-13, 2013 period.

³ This included an interactive outage map, list of known customer outages and informational messages, such as outage status. The upgrades also permitted the Company to modify its website during response to major system events so that specific customer messaging for outages (i.e., the safe use of generators) could be exclusively run. Finally, enhancements included an application to permit customers to report outages online. Development of the interactive outage map was commenced prior to January 2013.

⁴ The website improvements contributed to the substantially increased website traffic during the January 2-8, 2014 period. See footnote 8.

To improve the timeliness, accuracy and consistency of customer communications during major electrical system events, Newfoundland Power established a team referred to as the communications hub. The team is comprised of a mixture of operations, customer relations, communications and information services employees. The team is responsible for the assembly, update and dissemination to key employees of information relating to outage status and restoration.⁵

To improve the pool of employees available to communicate with customers through a major electrical system event, the Company identified additional employees for service in the Customer Contact Centre.⁶ The employees identified included employees in human resources, finance, conservation, regulatory, information services and audit functions.

In August 2013, the Company conducted a storm scenario test day in order to evaluate the improvements made in the aftermath of the January 2013 outage prior to the 2013/2014 hurricane season.

2. Customer Communications: January 2-8, 2014

Table 1 shows a summary of individual customer inquiries or contacts Newfoundland Power received from January 2-8, 2014.

Table 1
Customer Inquiries
January 2-8, 2014

Source	Number of Inquiries
Customer calls	156,008 ⁷
Emails	240
Website visits	947,215 ⁸
New Twitter followers	6,561 ⁹
Facebook page likes	4,119

⁵ This includes information from company sources, such as the Customer Contact Centre, System Control Centre and Field Operations. It also includes information gathered from a diverse array of external sources, including customers, Hydro, fire and emergency services, department of transportation, municipalities, critical suppliers (i.e., fuel and food suppliers), school districts and seniors' homes.

⁶ During major electrical system events and restoration, Newfoundland Power's Customer Contact Centre operates on an around the clock basis. During the January 11-13, 2013 electrical system event, Newfoundland Power encountered shortages of qualified employees available to answer customer inquiries.

⁷ Newfoundland Power did not record how many customer calls to the Customer Contact Centre were related specifically to *rotating power outages*. Instead, the Company simply coded calls related to all aspects of the electrical system events as *outage calls*.

⁸ The peak periods of web site visits occurred on January 4th, 2014 (approximately 219,000 visits) and January 5th, 2014 (approximately 200,000 visits). By comparison, there were approximately 1 million visits to the Company's web site during the full year in 2013, and 156,500 during the January 2013 supply outage event.

⁹ Newfoundland Power now has over 16,000 Twitter followers.

1 In addition to individual customer contacts and inquiries, Newfoundland Power used
2 digital and mass media to send broader messages to its customers concerning the
3 status of events during the electrical system outage. These included 598 website
4 postings and 302 original social media posts.¹⁰ Of these digital media messages, just
5 over 50% related to the rotating power outages undertaken by Newfoundland Power.

6
7 Over 100 media interviews on radio and television and in newspapers were completed
8 by Newfoundland Power as part of its mass media efforts to keep customers informed
9 of the status of events relating to electrical system events, including rotating power
10 outages.¹¹

11 12 **3. Conclusion**

13
14 Newfoundland Power is currently assessing its customer communications
15 performance during the period January 2-8, 2014 with a view to assessing what
16 improvements may be warranted in light of experience.

¹⁰ In addition to the 302 original social media posts, Newfoundland Power re-tweeted an additional 160 Hydro and government tweets relating to the electrical system outage.

¹¹ These media interviews ranged from routine radio updates done by communications staff to media scrums including Newfoundland Power executives.