



Poll Shows Surprises in How People Rate Utah Power

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Utah Power defends its performance during the great Holiday Storm, saying it was the worst storm with the most damage the company has seen in 20 years.

But what kind of report card do the people, themselves, give Utah Power? An exclusive KSL poll shows some surprises.

First, the power problems were bigger than we thought. The second surprise ... many people feel pretty good about Utah Power.

Our survey suggests that well over 600,000 people lost power after Christmas, roughly a third of all Wasatch Front residents.

Naturally that led to many complaints, even in one interesting case where the electricity kept flowing.

At a Salt Lake City duplex, the storm brought down a powerline on Christmas night. It lay across the parking lot 'til the day after New Years. A hot powerline under the snow.

Residents repeatedly called Utah Power's customer service center. The company can't explain why it took eight days to make a simple fix, although the line was insulated. Utah Power's Dave Eskelsen says it someone had touched the line, it probably would not have hurt them, but still it was an unsafe condition that the company did not want to happen.

Utah Power was swamped with calls after Christmas. And our exclusive KSL poll helps explain why.

Lost Power in Storm?

---Yes:	36%
---No:	60%
---Not Sure:	4%

36 percent in the six county metro area say they had outages. That could mean roughly 700,000 people without power.

Satisfied with Utah Power response?

--Very:	41%
--Somewhat:	26%
--Not Very:	25%
--Not At All:	8%

Those who lost electricity generally give Utah Power a passing grade. Two thirds said they are very or somewhat satisfied with the company's response.

That undoubtedly reflects the fact that repair crews restored power to 86 percent of the customers within 24 hours.

Confident in Utah Power's Reliability?

---Very	22%
---Somewhat	50%
---Not Very	22%

---Not At All 6%

Our poll showed most residents are very or somewhat confident in Utah Power's ability to provide reliable electricity during severe weather. More than a quarter have doubts.

Difficulty Communicating with Utah Power?

---Yes: 31%
---No: 56%
---Not Sure: 13%

Nearly a third say they've had difficulty communicating with the company.

Which brings us back to that downed power line. The duplex caretaker says when he called Utah Power, they told him people without power needed to be taken care of first.

In spite of the modestly good report card, Utah Power may get a grilling tomorrow morning. The Public Service Commission will take comments from the public.

It's worth remembering that a third of those who lost power are not satisfied-- a sizeable portion of a very large number.