

Emergency Communications

Polar Vortex 2019

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Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this presentation are the author's own and do not reflect the view of the Michigan Public Service Commission or the State of Michigan.

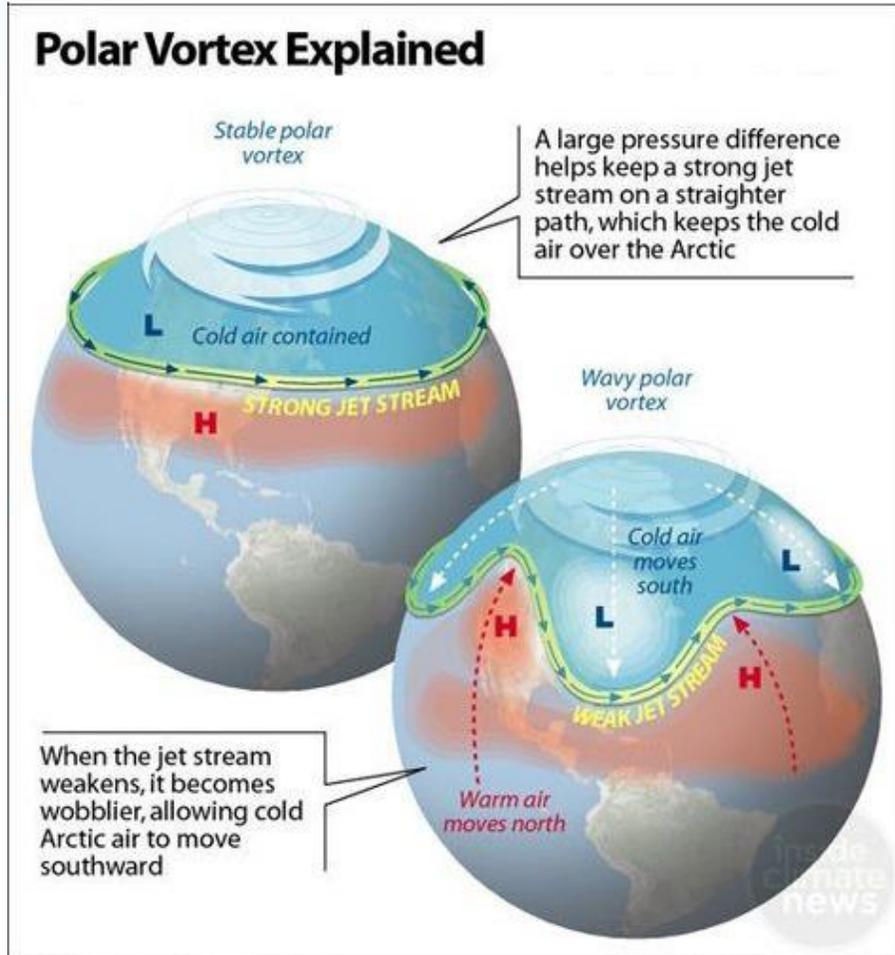
Crisis Preparedness

Experience demonstrates that organizational leadership often does not understand that in the absence of adequate internal and external communications:

- Operational response will break down.
- Stakeholders will not know what is happening and quickly become confused, angry, and negatively reactive.
- The organization will be perceived as inept, at best, and criminally negligent, at worst.
- The length of time required to bring full resolution to the issue will be extended, often dramatically.
- The impact to the financial and reputational bottom line will be more severe.

<https://www.bernsteincrisismanagement.com/the-10-steps-of-crisis-communications/>

Polar Vortex / Arctic Oscillation of 2019



SOURCES: NOAA; Scientific American

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air over Earth's North and South Poles. When the jet stream weakens, it becomes wavier, allowing that cold air to dip southward in places while warmer air pushes northward

January 2019 Record Cold Summary

Weather Forecast Office
NWS Detroit, MI

Low <u>Max</u> Temp °F			Low <u>Min</u> Temp °F		
DETROIT	Observed	Record	DETROIT	Observed	Record
Wednesday January 30	1 (2019)	7 (1951)	Wednesday January 30	-13 (2019)	-4 (1951)
Thursday January 31	3 (2019)	7 (1920)	Thursday January 31	-14 (2019)	-7 (1920)

FLINT			FLINT		
Observed	Record	Observed	Record		
Wednesday January 30	2 (2019)	8 (1951)	Wednesday January 30	-14 (2019)	-16 (1951)
Thursday January 31	3 (2019)	6 (1971)	Thursday January 31	-14 (2019)	-8 (1963)

Record Broken/Tied

f NWSDetroit weather.gov/dt

Michigan – January 30, 2019

Weather Conditions

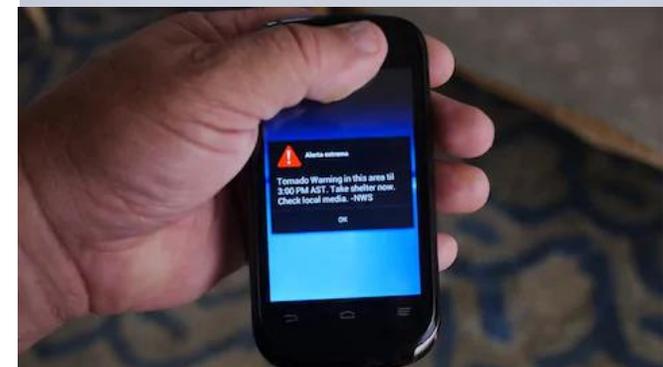
- Temperatures 20 to 20 degrees below average
- Increased demand for electric and home heating fuels

Electric Reliability

- Traditional upgrade and maintenance time
- Shift in winter usage, higher peaks (greater demand)
- Max Generation Alert - MISO

Ray Compressor Station

- Fire at compressor plant #3 (1 of 3 on site)
- Gas vented at all three stations
- Due to design/wind conditions, ignites and spreads original fire
- Contributes up to 64 percent of company's daily average of 2.5 bcf of natural gas
- Sits above Consumer's largest natural gas storage area with a capacity of 41.2 bcf



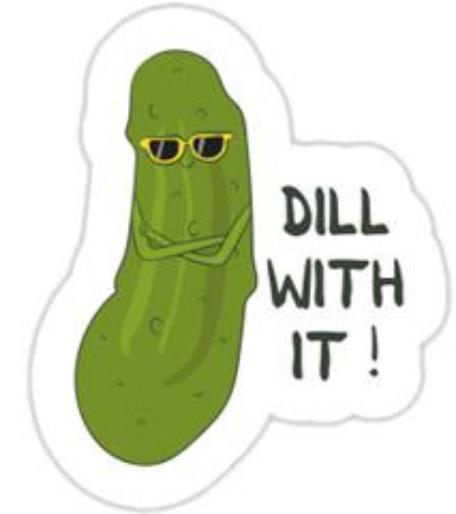
Emergency Response Activities

- SEOC is activated
 - Regular agency debriefs are held
 - MPSC deploys staff
 - Governor arrives at SEOC
 - Utility deploys staff to SEOC
 - County EMs prepare for mass sheltering
- Utility
 - Attempts to repair infrastructure
 - Institutes industrial NG curtailment
 - Seeks additional natural gas
 - Lines up mutual aid for possible restoration
 - Launches communication plan



Complicating Issues..

- Too much cross-communication.
- Mis-information and online rumors.
- Utilities were in a pickle: reduce electric generation (and be fined by MISO) or stop gas flow to thousands of residential customers.



Outstanding Questions

- When would Ray Station come back online, if at all?
- Was there enough pressure in the distribution system to stave off residential NG outages?
- If we lost residential gas distribution circuits, where would we lose them and when?
 - How many residents would need emergency sheltering?
- Could a public appeal for reduced NG usage help reduce demand and improve system pressure?

Crisis Response & Communication

- MSP-EMHSD
 - Monitor/Investigate/Prepare
 - Debrief/consult with utility, Governor, MPSC, Media, County EMs, and other State Agencies
 - Activation of emergency broadcast system
- Governor
 - Public and present
 - Joint public appeal for NG conservation
- Utility
 - Returned one compressor station to service
 - Opened/closed distribution and transmission interconnections to help bolster system pressure
 - Launched public media campaign: Facebook Live, press releases, news spots, etc.
 - Joint public appeal for NG conservation

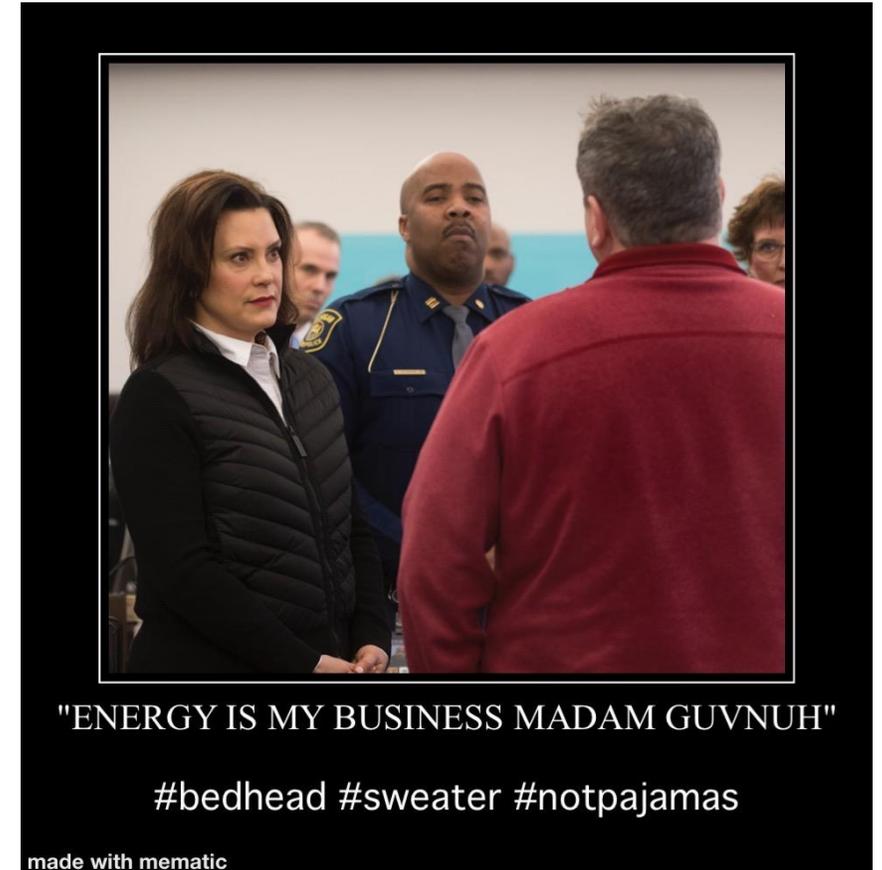


After Action - Questions

- Use of the emergency broadcast system during Ray street emergency requesting citizens lower their thermostats resulted in 10% reduction of consumer demand yet there were some critical voices.
 - Was this an appropriate use of the system?
 - How could we have worded the message better and ensured it reached only the appropriate target?
- How do we exercise communication plans and procedures more intensely or effectively? How do you control cross-communication?
- How do you battle misinformation? When, if ever, is it appropriate to “set the record straight?”
- How do we strike a balance between accuracy and timeliness of complex information in our social media and internet driven news cycle?

Crisis Communication - Takeaways

- Expect the unexpected.
- We have gotten really good at handling routine energy disruptions and outages, the perfect storms are the killers.
- We need to broaden our exercise range, *not to the outrageous* but to the lesser seen and more perplexing events (curtailments).
- Communication to public needs to be open and honest. Provide context for decision making.
- **You need pre-drafted emergency messaging to explain complex energy systems/situations and for public conservation appeals.**





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