

How CRC is Able to Dispatch for 350 Utilities

This information is being provided from the perspective of Cooperative Response Center, Inc. (CRC), a contact (call) center offering call handling and crew dispatch services to 350 utilities, most of which serve between 5,000 and 100,000 meters. The solutions discussed most likely pertain to electric distribution systems that fall within that range. The content is based on CRC's experience with crew assignment and management during electric service outages.

Understanding Call Handling Services

CRC understands the staffing and/or phone system challenges facing electric utilities to provide good customer service to its consumers. The management of calls during higher-than-normal call times – both during regular business hours and after-hours – can be a challenge for many organizations. Secondly, we understand the dilemma faced by electric distribution systems that manage a 24/7 in-house dispatch center. Such an operation can be very costly to run and often has limitations answering multiple calls during outage events. Instead of entrusting one person with all the after-hour tasks, a call center splits the tasks among several departments to achieve higher quality and efficient results for its consumer base.

By using CRC's services, the limitations, challenges, and obstacles of running your own call-answering and dispatch center are eliminated. CRC's dispatch team coordinates outage ticket information generated by our customer service representatives and automated systems whenever your consumers report an outage event. CRC uses location and prediction information from the outage management system (OMS) to identify and prioritize areas affected by a service outage. Then we work with your crews until the outage is restored.

CRCLink®

CRC's proprietary software, CRCLink, coordinates call handling services, management of outage events, and crew dispatching. Our call handling/dispatch software is structured to integrate directly with each utility's existing software and processes, using customized call handling instructions per the utility staff's specifications. Real-time, two-way integration with customer information systems (CIS), OMS, and automated metering infrastructure (AMI) provide the seamless flow of information between CRC and the utility.

OMS functionality includes

- Real time outage updates/changes
- Predicted outage status from automatic meter infrastructure (AMI)
- Ability to change/verify AMI status
- Outage dispatch notes
- Crew assignments
- Restoral information

Detailed Crew Dispatch Instructions

Detailed crew dispatch instructions and reliable crew communications are the keys to CRC's success of crew management during outage events. These instructions include crew on-call schedules, initial crew set-up, weekday and after-hour dispatch processes, additional lineman/ crew whenever an event warrants more than one crew assignment, crew safety check-in, and emergency mayday procedures.

Crew management includes extensive note taking on crew activity during the event and upon power restoration. Restoral data, including cause/equipment codes, is provided to each utility summarizing the previous day's crew dispatch activity.

Dedicated Backline Toll-Free Number

CRC provides each of our member utilities a dedicated toll-free backline number for direct communication with our dispatch center. Whenever a lineman calls CRC, our system recognizes what utility is calling and populates the current outage information prior to the CRC dispatcher answering the lineman's call. CRC dispatchers also have the ability to talk with a lineman via telepatch radio communication whenever cell phone service coverage is limited (as long as the utility has implemented that process).

Summary

Power outage restoration remains the utmost priority for electric distribution utilities. The common thread among the utilities for which CRC provides line crew dispatch services is the ability to do more with less. By partnering with CRC, you gain a seamless extension of your operations with one goal – providing world-class service to your consumers. Working together, we can improve the customer satisfaction and efficiency of your business.

Contact CRC

For more information about CRC's Energy Dispatch Services, please contact our regional business managers below.



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