



# Communicating with Customers When the Topic is Tough

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Korey Bush  
AGM-Customer Service  
November 2, 2022

## Objective

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- Introduction
- Welcome to Customer Service
- Tough Topics
- Meeting Challenges Head On
- Lessons Learned

Welcome to Customer Service!

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# Welcome to the Jungle

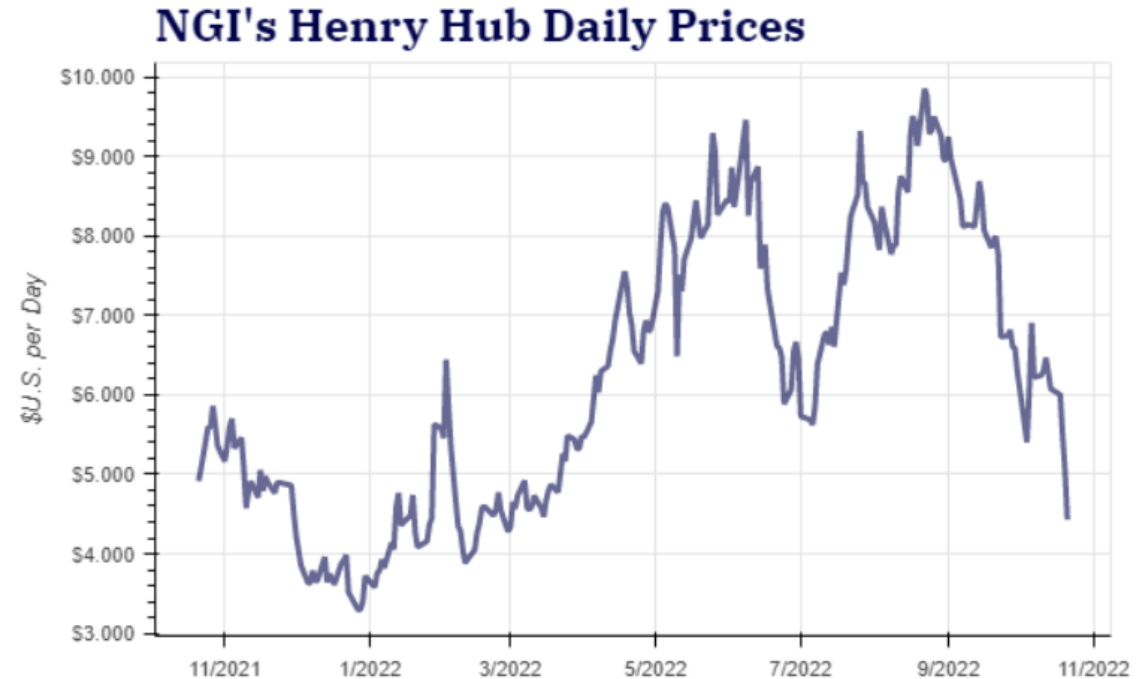


- Previous AGM left in April, I Accepted the AGM Position in Late May
- Fuel Increase Approved in June and Again in August
- Hurricane Ian
- Base Rate Study and Possible Increase

## Fuel Rate Increase-Strategy

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- Met Head-On
- Increased/Modified Efficiency Rebate Program
- Adjusted PA Program
- Social Media Presence
- Addressed Billing Questions with Utility Committee



## Fuel Rate Increase-Strategy vs Results

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### Strategy

- Max out Efficiency Dollars
- Offered Energy Audit Rebates
- Incentivized Paperless
- August-PAs IF Customer is Paying, We Were Granting
- Agency Commitments
  - FY 20 \$652 k - FY 21 \$809 k
  - FY 22 \$1.3 million

### Result

- Balanced out Inflated Prices
- Audits Scheduled Out 2 Months, Coordinators Busy
- Paperless Billing at 64%
- PAs Totals Elevated
- Returned \$1.2 million to Our Customers
- Write-Offs as a % of Revenue  
FY 2022 **0.13%**





# Fuel Rate Increase-Social Media

change.org

Petition details



## Make Lakeland Affordable

7,198 have signed

At 7,500 signatures, this petition is likely to go viral!

Carly Cashman

### Reasons for signing

**Dawn Dees** · 2 months ago  
Lakeland electric a lil bitch  
20 · Report

**Jonathan Williams** · 2 months ago  
These rates are putting financial str  
10 · Report

**Josue Estronza** · 2 months ago  
My Wife and I aren't getting paid a l  
inflation is getting out of control. I c  
electricity and water are a necessity  
for something that is needed to sur  
not price gouged to hell. This shoul  
7 · Report

**Tracy Clement** · 2 months ago  
Because my electric bill is well over  
have another increase for the new t  
around in the dark all day but it con  
7 · Report

**Alayna Myers** · 2 months ago  
Lakeland Electric needs to be held a  
the people and families of Lakeland  
for Lakeland and take advantage of  
cities have decreased their prices to  
same?  
6 · Report

**Chris Reger** · 2 months ago  
Not like we can shop around for better rates/service  
6 · Report

**Debbie Herrington** · 2 months ago  
Lived here our whole life and it's sad to say it's getting so high we can't afford it.  
6 · Report

**Joseph Bush** · 2 months ago  
I'm signing because our bill is over \$300 and never had that before. This is outrageous  
5 · Report

**Sierra Redden** · 2 months ago  
It's not affordable anymore it's no way I should b paying a \$400 lightbill at 2/1 apartment  
5 · Report

**Lori Stevens-Smith** · 1 month ago  
Lakeland makes decisions that takes care of their "cash cow" but at the expense of persons who have no vote...aka, people who live in the county and not Lakeland proper. They also make certain that it is difficult to get enough solar for your home and not to be able to sell back to them... instead only a credit would be given. They are a monopoly ... [Read more](#)  
2 · Report



# Hurricane Ian

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- Sc

**Lakeland Electric** ✓  
Oct 3 · 🌐

Easement Work is a slow and tedious process. Its also very tiring for our Restoration Crews. Having a clear area for them to work is extremely h... See More



**Find the Linemen**

**LAKELAND ELECTRIC**  
POWERED FOR LIFE

283 likes 45 comments 27 shares

Like Comment Share

- 
- 

**Lakeland Electric** ✓  
Oct 4 · 🌐

We at Lakeland Electric thank you for the privilege of serving you, especially after Hurricane Ian roared through Polk County just six days ago. Th... See More



**THANK YOU FOR LETTING US SERVE YOU**

**10/4 AT 9 PM**

**100% RESTORED**

[www.LakelandElectric.com](http://www.LakelandElectric.com)

**LAKELAND ELECTRIC**  
POWERED FOR LIFE

271 likes 65 comments 61 shares

Like Comment Share

m to

ideos

a



# Hurricane Ian

**Lakeland Electric** • Published by Agorapulse • October 3 at 4:26 PM

For our 4:00pm Oct. 3rd Update:  
We are reporting 2,200 customers without power.  
We have restored 97% of our storm-related outages.

We are on track to restore the majority of the SOUTH SIDE of our service territory today. The remaining customers can expect their power to be restored by the end of the day Tuesday. A few small outages remain on the NORTH SIDE of our service territory that will be restored by the end of the day Tuesday.

Some customers with damage to their electrical components may not be ready to receive power and we can not restore their power until their repairs are completed. Information about the customer's responsibility is available here: [https://lakelandelectric.com/.../...\\_who-is-responsible...](https://lakelandelectric.com/.../..._who-is-responsible...)

Type of work:

- The remaining work is mostly scattered and small outages of 50 customers or less.
- Easement work will continue until the end of restoration; these jobs can take longer to complete because of the constrained working area.
- Bucket trucks will not fit in these areas, so lineworkers must climb poles or use special equipment to work in these areas.

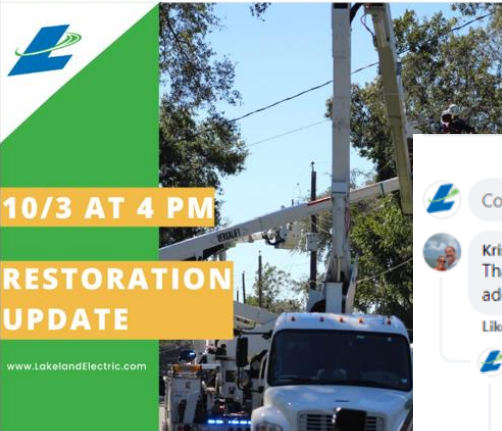
Restoration personnel:

- Over 500 field personnel are working to restore power.
- We have over 300 mutual aid personnel here from Texas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Alabama, North Carolina, New Jersey and Louisiana to assist with our power restoration effort.
- Lakeland Electric has 200 personnel in the field restoring power.

Customer information:

- The Call Center is open with its regular hours 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and is taking \*\*CORRECTION -- only storm-related calls\*\* 863-834-9535. We apologize for the confusion earlier today.

#Lineline #CityofLakeland #Lkld #PolkCounty #PublicPower #PublicPower #Linemen #Lineworkers #Ineives #Inesposes #Lakeland #PolkCounty #Hurricaneian #hurricaneian22 #lan #lkld #cityoflakeland #lakeland #lkldnow #thelidger #latoday #floridastrong



6,171 People reached 897 Engagements - Distribution score

83 33 Comments

Like Comment Share



**Ryan Mckeen**

Although we were one of the very last storm related outages to be fixed today, what Lakeland Electric was able to accomplish in the last several days was impressive! Driving around and seeing the tree damage in our city, it is incredible that everything was fixed so quickly!

Thankful for their hard work (and for the out of town workers). Especially thankful for the men that fixed our power and were very friendly and helpful while they were here!

Like Reply Hide 3w Edited



Author

**Lakeland Electric**

Ryan Mckeen Your patience was appreciated. 500 personnel working 16+ hr days...glad you're restored...

Like Reply Commented on by Agorapulse 3w



All comments

Comment as Lakeland Electric

**Kristy Surrency Soldati**  
Thanks so much for all your hard work. Is there anyway to get an ETA for a specific address? Thanks again!

Like Reply Hide 3w

Author  
**Lakeland Electric**  
Kristy Surrency Soldati More specific estimated times of restoration are not available for individuals or individual areas at this time.

Like Reply Commented on by Agorapulse 3w

**Kristy Surrency Soldati**  
Lakeland Electric okay thank you anyway.

Like Reply Hide 3w

Reply to Lakeland Electric...

**Lakeland Electric** • Oct 2

Hurricane Ian Most Commonly Asked Restoration Questions

18 shares 2.4K views

Like Comment Share

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Reply to Lakeland Electric...

# Base Rate Study-Strategy

- Met with Committee/Commission (Process)
- Met with Key Accounts, LEDC
- Timing Considerations
  - Political
  - Economical (Shoulder Months)
- Commercial & Industrial % of Impact (Budgetary)
- Roll Out of New Rates in March

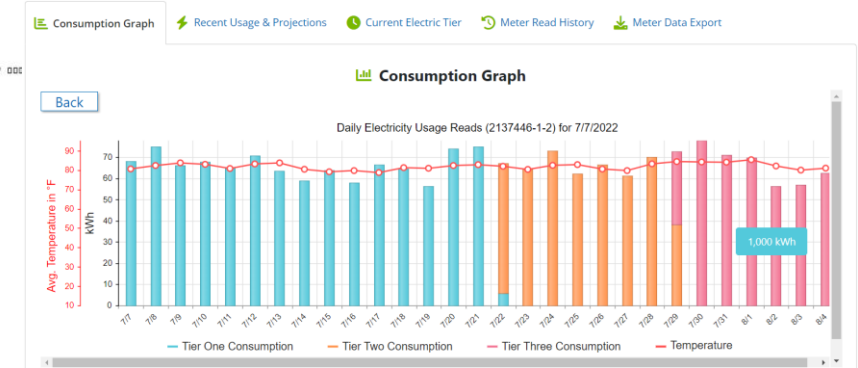
**Lakeland Electric**  
Account # 0000000  
Due Date: 09/06/2022  
Amount Due: \$407.77

**Bill Summary**

Category	Amount
Electric	\$274.22
Water	\$52.05
Other Services	\$81.50
<b>Total Current Charges</b>	<b>\$407.77</b>

**Contact Us**

- Electric / Water Billing Inquiries: 863-834-9535
- Wastewater / Solid Waste Billing: 863-834-8276
- Fallen Power Lines / Water Outages: 863-834-4248
- False Alarms (Lakeland Police Dept): 863-834-6940
- Miscellaneous Fire Dept Billings: 863-834-4201
- 24-Hour Power Outage Reporting: 866-834-4248
- 24-Hour Payment Hotline: 863-834-9535
- TDD (For Hearing Impaired): 863-834-8333
- Recycling: 863-834-8774
- Surge Protection: 863-834-1500



## Base Rate Study-Result

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- Unknown
- Feedback has Been “Understanding”
- Similar to 2018 - Hurricane = Rate Study
- Preparing for Backlash
- Posts and Stories Featuring Field Workers Has Proven to Produce Less Negative Feedback
- First Public Announcement is Friday.....



## Takeaways

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- Meet Head On
- Know your Audience
- Get Ahead of the Message
- Consistency
- Facts Not Feelings





# Questions or Comments

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