Most of this week’s column is dedicated to the major wind storm that ripped through the area Wednesday, March 8 resulting in power loss for more than 120,000 RG&E customers in Monroe County during a time of extreme cold. Penfield had 9,017 residential and commercial properties without power during the highest outage period.

RG&E’s goal was to have 90+% of its customer base back in service by Sunday midnight. However, there are isolated areas with significant damage to poles in backyards which will require more hand-work to repair or replace poles, lines, and transformers.

Our Department of Public Works (DPW) crews were intensely busy the first 36 hours focused on clearing roadways and rights-of-way to ensure emergency vehicles had access to every property and that utility crews had access to service broken poles, downed wires, and damaged transformers. The last count I heard from daily conference calls with RG&E was that there were 400+ broken poles across the county. More than half of them are in backyards which makes it even more difficult to repair and replace, as I noted above.

Due to the severity of the windstorm on Wednesday, the Town of Penfield will provide residents with a town-wide, roadside pick-up for fallen limbs, branches, and brush. Once we confirm that power has been restored to all residents, and our DPW can verify that all roads are safe, rights-of-way are cleared of hazards, and creeks are free of debris, DPW crews will begin a town-wide pick-up starting the week of March 20.

We expect the pick-up process to take two to three weeks, with town crews making one pass per neighborhood. DPW will post anticipated dates and instructions for specific streets and areas of town on www.penfield.org prior to pick-up to alert residents. PLEASE NOTE: With winter snow-plowing season still in full effect, any posted schedule may be interrupted to prioritize snow removal on town roads or for any other emergency requiring the immediate attention of town crews. We ask for your patience as our DPW works diligently to maintain safety for all residents.

Additionally, the town board has extended the hours of brush drop-off at the DPW facility (1607 Jackson Road) from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM for all seven days of the week to assist residents and their contractors with cleanup of their properties. We will return to normal drop-off hours starting Monday, March 27.

I always like to remind our residents to be wary of “scams” during emergencies like this storm. Many contractors go door-to-door to offer their services for tree removal or for repairs to roofs and siding. Some of these individuals may not have your best interest in mind, rather their financial gain! If you do have damage to your home, please work with your insurance company or a known contractor you have a relationship with or have used in the past. If you need tree service consider receiving three or more quotes from reputable tree services or get recommendations from your insurance company or a trusted relative or friend who has had experience with the company. I do not want to see residents who have been impacted by the storm be taken advantage of by less-than-reputable contractors.
Beginning Monday evening, March 13, our area is under a winter storm watch. Public safety remains our priority as we clean up from the wind event and prepare for the winter storm. It is our understanding that we will be receiving plowable amounts of snow this week. Please make sure that any brush piles brought to the front of your property for pick-up are far enough away from the road to provide safe passage for pedestrians and vehicles, and to give plows necessary room to clear snow. Do not block fire hydrants.

When preparing brush piles for DPW pick-up, please cut brush and limbs to six-foot lengths and stack parallel to the road. Consider consolidating small piles with neighbors for efficiency. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

If you have an elderly person in your family or neighborhood please continue to keep an eye on them to ensure they have heat, food, and water. Our seniors are a hearty group and have survived much worse during their lives; however, it is always good for neighbors to support neighbors...thank you in advance for assisting your neighbors!

Until next week, please be careful while cleaning up, especially if you are using power equipment like saws and wood splitters. Be sensitive to those around you and be careful of limbs and trees snapping back as you are cutting. I do not want to see any of our residents injured...be well and be safe!

Tony

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