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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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The Launch, Test and Growth of AMP's Mutual Aid Program

While mutual aid existed in an informal way, it wasn't until 1984 — when AMP created a formal Mutual Aid Program — that it became a truly regional affair. It faced its first major test mere months later after an F5 tornado ripped through northeastern Ohio on May 31, 1985. Since then, the Mutual Aid Program has grown alongside AMP's member footprint. Today, the program has grown beyond the original vision, with AMP and members responding to calls for aid both regionally and nationally. Larry Durkos, the retired superintendent and former lineworker at Newton Falls Electric Department; Pete Giacomo, the retired manager of the City of Wadsworth Electric and Communications and an original sector coordinator of the Mutual Aid Program; Gene Post, retired general manager of City of Wadsworth Electric and Communications and former chair of the Mutual Aid Committee; Ed Krieger, director of the Piqua Power System, AMP Board of Trustees member and chair of the Mutual Aid Committee; Bill Lyren, Jr., current general manager of City of Wadsworth Electric and Communications and gold sector coordinator of the Mutual Aid Program; and Michelle Palmer, AMP vice president of technical services and compliance, share their memories of the formation of the program, its first major test in Newton Falls, and the growth of the program since it first began.

AMP: How and when did AMP's Mutual Aid Program come to be established?

Giacomo: I think it was '83 or '84, John Curtin came along, and he was the utilities director in Bryan, Ohio. John called me and wanted to know if I would assist him in getting a mutual aid program going like they had in Indiana. ... We put together a committee of John, myself, Bob Sumner from Hamilton, Dave Mulholland from Napoleon, Harold Clawson from Westerville, and Dick Williams from Wellington. And we all met in Bryan and we actually banged out the program that we had then. ... We divided the state into four sections. I was the chairman of what was called the gold section, John Curtin was the chairman in the red section, Bob Sumner, the black section, and Dick Williams in the green section. When that tornado hit Newton Falls, we put what we thought (was) a good program into action. That was '84 when we actually got the program approved, and it was 1985, the end of May, that that tornado would hit Newton Falls.

AMP: The AMP Mutual Aid network activated for the first time in May 1985, after an outbreak of tornadoes in northeast Ohio, and AMP member communities responded to assist Newton Falls with restoration efforts after an F5 tornado struck that city. Can you recall what happened — the extent of the destruction, how mutual aid helped rebuild the system and how long it took?

Durkos: It kind of took a swath down through the middle of our system. That whole day was odd. It was extremely hot and very still. There was no breeze, no air moving anywhere. I was at home with my daughter when the tornado occurred. In fact, I was feeding her; she was in the highchair. ... I heard the tornado siren, and you know, you kind of go into shock. ... By the time I got done fiddling with the seatbelt in the high chair and

got down in the basement, it pretty much was already by us. The first thing I did was call my parents who lived across town and made sure they were okay. My father walked over from his house and got my daughter and took her to their house, and I went to work. It was quite an experience. I've never seen anything like that. First thing we did was try to get the roads opened up because there were poles and trees and pieces of houses and everything everywhere. One thing that is forever burned in my mind is the following morning, I was working close to the covered bridge, which is pretty much where the center of the storm went through, and it started to get light and it was unbelievable. It looked like a bomb went up. I mean, it was total destruction everywhere — houses, pieces of houses and trees and poles and everything. We started getting mutual aid from AMP, which without that we would have totally been lost. The crews started coming in, bringing in poles and wire and materials. It was unbelievable the amount of help we had. I was a lineman back then. And I was out working, but everything came together. Everybody pulled together and crews started on different sections and went to work. It was quite a sight.

Giacomo: We actually saw it on television. I met with Bill Lyren (Sr.), who was my boss and the service director in Wadsworth, and he and I talked, and I said, "I think we're going to have to go up there because we can't make contact with anybody there." I called Dick Williams from Wellington ... and we drove to Newton Falls, and it was like nothing you've ever seen. It was scary. We met with Ron Miller, who was the superintendent there, asked him what he needed, what he wanted, how we could help him, and we decided we should bring in maybe nine or 10 crews from different cities. We went out of the area and I called Bill Lyren and told him, start bringing crews in. And, you know, we sent crews from Bowling Green Cuyahoga Falls, Dover Galion, Oberlin, Orville, Shelby, Wadsworth, Wellington and Westerville. And then we had Columbus and Cleveland standing by in case we needed more. And we told every crew to just put as much material on your truck as you can get on it. I told our crew just get as many poles on that pole trailer as you can get on, then head this way. They put so many on there, they could hardly go over 25 miles an hour. ... There's a river that goes through town, and we decided to divide the town in half, and Bob Dupee and Jerry Butterfield took the west side of the river with half the crews. I took the east side of the river, and we just started working. We were able to set up our headquarters at the line shop because it wasn't damaged too badly. The National Guard set up their headquarters at a little center that was a little bit outside of town. The main operation was out of city hall, which was right downtown where everything had gotten damaged pretty badly. Newton Falls has one substation with four circuits out of it. We determined that once we got the substation back on, we might be able to bring on one or two of these circuits that weren't damaged too badly. Another problem come up, that Ohio Edison had about 25 or 30 customers in town sprinkled all through town. And so (we had) some streets that had pole lines on both sides of the street, but everything was laying in the middle of the street. We were fortunate that my old boss from Ohio Edison was now the Warren division manager. We made some agreements that once either Edison or we got a street ready to bring back on that we wouldn't reenergize it until we made sure both utilities were in the clear, because our main concern was safety and not getting anybody hurt. And then we also made an agreement that if you were an Ohio Edison customer before the storm, you were going to be one after; if you were a Newton Falls customer, you were going to be a Newton Falls customer. We would not switch customers or take other people's customers. Jim Davies at that time worked for what was Westinghouse and Pat Brady worked for Electric Lab. They were the salesmen. They came into town, and we told them, "Just get us as much material as you can get us. Anything you get, just bring it in." And they did. And then both of

them stayed and actually helped out by answering phones and doing things like that once the phone companies start bringing their facilities back online. And we just kept going at it. ... Late Tuesday afternoon, we decided to send everybody home to get clothes for another week and to restock trucks. Well, everybody was back before noon on Wednesday. And we just started again, and we just kept after it. And what we did was we told the people in Newton Falls, "Give us your system. And when we get done, we'll give it back to you." I don't know how, with the people we had, with the damage that was there, that everybody that could have electricity had electricity in a week. And when we first looked at that, we were talking three weeks to a month. But I've never seen guys work that hard, that long, to where we would work every daylight hour. ... I forget how many poles we replaced. It was like 120 poles and we straightened another, I don't know 70 or 80 poles. And I think that what happened was everybody had compassion for the people because their house is gone, or half their house is gone. One thing I remember is there was a two-story house that had a riding tractor stuck in the side of the second floor. You see things like that, and you think how people, how numbers of people didn't get killed. The Ford dealer in town got completely destroyed, and I have pictures here of cars piled on top of cars, and two blocks up the street is a Chevrolet dealer that didn't even get a window broken. So, you know, it's just crazy the way a storm like that hits, but what I can say is the mutual aid program worked. And I think it worked pretty much the way it was designed. I think the suppliers came through for us. They worked to have materials sent in, and everything just came together just the way it was planned.

Post:

I think the thing that sticks out about Newton Falls to me more than anything is that the damage that we saw. I've never seen anything like that since. We arrived early in the morning and it was still dark, and when the sun came up, it was just beyond anything that you could imagine, really. The National Guard was there. I'd never been around the National Guard before. They were fully employed, with helicopters and full, full troops. A lot of people that were there were just disoriented. I talked to a couple individuals who basically had just come out of their basement, and they just didn't know what happened. The trees were a real tell-tale sign because of the way they were twisted. I've never seen that before or after. It looked like somebody put an eggbeater up there and just twisted them around. Buildings, concrete and brick buildings, just totally laying down in the middle of street. Cars that were picked up and moved quite some distance. ... It was so bad that we all just kind of were in awe of it. It was tough in the beginning, because of all the debris that was in road. One of the ways that they fixed it was they brought in dozers. And they basically put the dozer in the street and just pushed everything out of the way, didn't matter what it was. ... The response was very strong. I can remember a lot of the people that were there. We had a lot of good people there, working very hard. I know we took a lot of poles. I remember taking, I think, it was 23 poles on our pole trailer. It took us like two hours to get there. And that first day we had put them all back into the ground. But it was just devastation of a magnitude that was hard for me to get my hands on, really. ... The devastation, the poles were just battered, beaten, and sometimes gone. That's crazy. Transformers missing, the kinds of things that you see today on The Weather Channel all the time. But, you know, in 1985, there was no Weather Channel that would give you that kind of visual. ... We were there about eight days. The early days were extremely long. The thing that I remember the most is being very tired and very dirty. And that was just that was a normal day. It was very, very physical.

AMP: Can you talk about how the Mutual Aid Program currently works? How are participating members organized, and how is mutual aid activated when there is a need?

Lyren: All of the participating mutual aid members are placed in a sector, mostly by their geographic location. AMP's entire member footprint is made up of six sectors. Once a member decides that mutual aid is necessary ... that communication gets back to their sector coordinator, who will then take the lead in understanding what type of level is needed. For instance, how many crews are needed, what type of equipment is needed, and are there any materials needed? Once that information is collected, the sector coordinator can start contacting participating members to see if they're able to respond. The obvious benefit here is that the member in need ... can concentrate on putting their system back in service in preparation of the crew showing up.

Palmer: We provide to each sector the names of all of the communities that are within their group. And Scott McKenzie (director of member training and safety) oversees the program for AMP and serves as the sector coordinator of coordinators, if you will. And if there's an event, then the individual members have the opportunity to either reach out directly to their sector coordinator, or they can reach out directly to AMP. Within each sector, we try to help the members that are in that sector. From there, we branch out into the neighboring sectors, and then finally into all sectors of AMP, depending on how hard communities are hit and how much need is actually being requested. We expanded the program to include all AMP members in the early to mid-90s, so every member of AMP has the opportunity to join the AMP Mutual Aid Program. AMP actually assisted with APPA in setting up the national mutual aid network. We serve as a network coordinator on the national level, and we help coordinate AMP crews to assist in places like Florida, Alabama, New York, New Jersey, if the need arises for what we call our out-of-network mutual aid. We've gotten a little bit more sophisticated. You know, it used to be your phone tree. And some of our sector coordinators still utilize the phone tree. But we also utilize texting, GroupMe apps and different ways to get in contact with folks when there's an event.

Krieger: The neat thing about how the program's organized now, it's so easy to facilitate getting assistance to the community. ... With one phone call, if you need help, you're able to get hold of your sector coordinator and get the process rolling. ... It's very easy, and that's kind of the whole point, because when you're in the middle of a storm and a restoration, it can be really overwhelming. ... If you need help, we can have help there as soon as you need it. And this has been proven time and time again.

Post: I think the alignment that comes with the Mutual Aid Program, when everybody works for the single goal of helping the host, is key there. Everybody knew what needed to be done (in Newton Falls). And it's still that way today. It comes natural to a lineman what needs to be done. His safety and training really are what mutual aid is. When you have safety and training, you're going to have a good mutual aid program. And then if you have good coordination, and the hosts have a disaster plan that you can put into work, that's a big deal. The sector coordinators ... I think they're probably the unsung heroes of the Mutual Aid Program. A lot of these guys already have 24-hour, seven-day-a-week jobs and they step up. And they take on a coordination of a sector. I know they're busy already, and then they take on this extra stuff. It's just amazing the amount of volunteers that have helped the program.

AMP: How has the program grown since its inception, and even in the past 20 years?

Lyren: I think the majority of the growth has come in the form of how many members have decided to join the mutual aid program over the years. In the early days, there were only a small number of members willing to participate compared to the total number of AMP members. Today, that number, thankfully, has grown, and I'm sure it's due to the fact that the members can see the advantages of having a large number of members willing to answer the call in a time of need.

Krieger: I've been here since '98, and it's changed significantly over that time period. ...The overall coordination moved into the AMP staff and Michelle Palmer's group. And Scott McKenzie, the director of member training and safety, has really taken this mutual aid to a whole new level. Scott and I have a lot of common beliefs about things, and we're both actively involved on the APPA Mutual Aid Working Group. There was a time when AMP's Mutual Aid Program really didn't travel very far. As the AMP membership grew, that required us to start traveling, and early on Piqua traveled to Kentucky and West Virginia for response. We kind of made the decision — with a handful of us who were really interested in getting out there and helping beyond just our own little network — that as long as everyone back home was kind of taken care of, if a hurricane is headed for Florida, now, the process is, Scott gets out there, puts our availability out there, and we have crews travel across the country. We've been to Florida a few times. I think what's really cool is what we already knew. We hear back from these requesting communities and other states that they want our members to do the restoration because our guys are such hard workers. It's the Midwestern work ethic. And they really are skilled. We have great training programs. And so now the program's really gone from just being Ohio, to our footprint in terms of the Midwest, and now we travel nationally.

Post: The (AMP) footprint has grown so much that we had to change the agreements, because now you were dealing with interstate agreements. We had to get everybody to re-sign that original agreement. And at the same time, we had decided that we were going to participate in the APPA out-of-network agreement. Both of them were challenging to get folks to sign. But they very much were needed, and we use them both quite a bit. The fact that we were giving aid to our own members out of state, and out-of-network members out of state — that APPA out-of-network agreement was crucial to have before you started the aid. ... And then the pressure that companies put on you now because they're so digital, and they're so smart, and their equipment is so smart, that having mutual aid is not an option. It's an absolute need. You can change an outage from you know, three to four days to a day and a half just by getting a half dozen crews in there. And I really believe that the safety and training that AMP has provided to the members is what really drives the Mutual Aid Program. A well-trained lineman can do his job, whether it's in Wadsworth, or Galion or Madisonville, Kentucky; they know what to do. But they've got to be trained, and they've got to be safe while they do it. And that's the big growth for me. I see so much more training today than there was back when I was coming up, that it's almost not the same profession. The devices that they work on are smart. The meters that they install are smart. There are just all kinds of things in the substation talking to the reclosers and the capacitors out in the field. Now, that all takes a well-trained and educated lineman working alongside the engineers and that type of thing.

Palmer: This is really one of those programs that I think has remained pretty constant ... the general heart of it is the same. And that is neighbors helping neighbors, getting the crews there in a timely manner.

AMP: Can you share examples of other memorable instances where mutual aid provided assistance?

Lyren: You know, over the years, there have been many examples of AMP Mutual Aid. And I'm sure that every member that has had to make the call would attest to how important and what a great service this is. Also, in my opinion, no one event is more important than the other. I know that we've had events that are larger than others, but at the time of the call — and at times there have been multiple calls across the state all at the same time — that would be recognized as all of them are important. ... There's nothing more gratifying than to provide mutual aid to a member that's in need. And I personally have experienced (it) that when we show up to the village or the city, the look of relief that we get from the superintendents that have asked for the need — it is astonishing.

Krieger: As kind of an outreach to the mutual aid program, APPA had the Light up the Navajo Nation Program, where we traveled to the Navajo Nation and helped with that initiative. Basically, 75 percent of the homes that don't have electricity are in that region. And, you know, we (Piqua crews) were able to go there with employees from Wadsworth and Painesville to help with that effort. I don't think that would have been possible without the gains we've made in the Mutual Aid Program. To see what's out there, and to see the need, it's really pretty humbling and eye opening, and I know our employees came back changed by that initiative as well. ... I can remember when we responded to West Virginia, and the village manager who has since retired, made the point to come up to me and thank me for coming to help. You don't forget those kinds of things. ... I tell our employees, helping other members, it's really the most important thing we can do.

Post: When Hurricane Ike came to the state of Ohio ... we had well over 30 communities either asking for or receiving mutual aid; we were maxed out. One more call and we would have had to go to out of network. But luckily, we got through that without having to do it. I think that what that speaks to is the members help each other even when they are pretty tired themselves. (In) Madisonville, Kentucky ... when we coordinated that response, everybody in Ohio had had trouble. Madisonville, Kentucky, had had a lot of trouble finding anybody that would come and help them. I remember working with the superintendent, and he says, "Well, how many crews can you get me?" And I said, "Well, I probably can get you 10 to 12." He says, "Well, okay, I'm going to count on AMP to give me those 10 to 12 crews. And I'm going to go back to work." And he didn't call anybody else. We didn't know them, but we sent 10 to 12 crews in there. And they were there, some of them over two weeks. ... I remember Brewster, it was one of the ones that we managed just before I retired. It's just south of Wadsworth by about 20 miles or 25 miles. And they had had, it was either high winds or a tornado. It was your typical, smaller public power community, where they really only had two or three people for their line department. And they needed, of course, eight to 10 crews to manage what was wrong, and put it back up. We were able to get that done in a weekend. ... The other thing I remember is we hosted at Wadsworth several times and ... We had some two- or three-day (ones) in Wadsworth that were really non-stop around the clock. I remember those pretty vividly — how tired I was, and how grateful that we were for those who came to help us.

Palmer: The Shelby tornadoes that happened in April of 2019 ... We had 15 members that participated in that mutual aid event. Sixty percent of Shelby's system was out in the

early stages, and they were able to get everybody back on within two and a half days of work. They installed 30 poles, straightened 15 poles, installed 20 spans of new three-phase primary, and four spans of double-circuit three phase. I'm sure that Shelby would have gotten restored if we didn't have the Mutual Aid Program. But I think it definitely accelerated the restoration process. We've had other instances where AMP mutual aid crews have assisted down in Florida, for hurricanes. We've gone two or three different times down there over the last five years for large events, and they're actually some folks down in Florida that contact our crews first because they know that we have dedicated and hardworking lineworkers in our communities.

AMP: In your opinion, how important are AMP services, such as Mutual Aid, to our members?

Durkos: Well, that was basically the only time that we used the mutual aid, but we have gotten assistance from other cities within the system (in other ways). I mean, with AMP-Ohio you go to meetings, and you talk to other communities. And if you have a problem, start talking about it, "And, oh yeah, we had something similar to that. And this is what we did to correct it." The assistance you get, and the knowledge you get is invaluable.

Giacomo: I think what it (mutual aid) showed that if you work together, you can really get things done. ... I think when AMP Ohio set up their lineman training program, that was (also) a massive step forward, and even the Circuit Rider program ... I really look back and think if there wouldn't be AMP, a lot of these little communities might not be around.

Lyren: A large portion of AMP's mission is to provide services to members that they would be unable to do themselves. And obviously one of those beneficial services is certainly mutual aid. I believe that there are a lot of people who deserve a pat on the back who have made mutual aid so successful. I think the list would start with the AMP staff, people like Michelle Palmer, Jennifer Flockerzie, and Scott McKenzie. You know, these folks handle all of the details necessary to keep this member service flowing. The next person I might add is Ed Krieger with the City of Piqua who's the chairman of the Mutual Aid Committee. Ed has an exceptional passion for the success of the mutual aid program, and it definitely shows. Then there are the sector coordinators who stand at the ready for the calls and, you know, the calls come when they're least expected. Lastly, and most importantly, I believe, are the participating members — those who are willing to respond to a member in their time of need. And they do this willingly so that in the event, heaven forbid, their city or town needs assistance, they would know that members are on the way. There are two other services that Wadsworth is a heavy participant in and a very heavy supporter of and that is the safety program that is offered as a member service by AMP. We take a great deal of pride in our safety... And AMP helps us with that. We have a monthly commitment from AMP to come to the city Wadsworth, and not only speak to our electric and communication staff, but all departments citywide. ... We're so grateful that AMP continues to provide (lineworker training) as well. All of our linemen attend at least three annual sessions as they're coming up and becoming journeyman lineman. It's required, and we get exceptional feedback from those folks who attend those sessions on how much they appreciate us sending them to those.

Krieger: AMP is our joint action agency. It's the collective that makes all of us bigger than what we are. It's a member-driven organization, and that's why I've always tried to be really active. ... Depending on what the program is — whether it was expanding the rodeo initiatives, training programs, this mutual aid initiative — there are so many things that

we can do much better as a group than we can do individually, as just a member by ourselves. And, you know, it's really enjoyable, like with the mutual aid program, when our employees travel out of state or wherever, and then they get to work hand in hand with members from other AMP communities; they develop that bond.

Post: (Mutual aid) makes a big difference. It really does. You can save days. If you have good planning and good coordination, it's very easy to save days. Because your people are going to get tired, and they're going to have to rest, and the other people can fill in that gap. Being part of the program is good for your linemen too. Their learning curve can go straight up in a situation where it's not like they are at home. Now all of the sudden they're working with different equipment, different people. And they learn very fast some of the tricks of the trade that maybe would take them years otherwise. It's good for the supervisors to learn, good for administrators. And I know there's always a bump after people participate in it; they feel good.

Palmer: I think mutual aid is one of the core services that AMP is able to offer. It and safety probably rank up there pretty high, side by side with each other. It's hard for our member communities to find help outside of leaning on each other. Until our program became formalized, and we had a good way to get communities connected, you know not just the neighbors, but having a Hamilton go all the way up to help Wadsworth. Getting those guys connected, I think, has really strengthened the program over time. The members, they always knew who was right beside them. They had that relationship. It wasn't until AMP was able to step in, that (the program) provided those (larger) connections, across the state, and state to state, if you will.

AMP: **Why do you believe it is important to preserve and protect public power?**

Durkos: Well, public power is more than just your electricity. I mean, every department helps the other departments when they're in need. Like with our digger truck, if the wastewater department needed a pump pulled at one of the pumping stations, we'd bring the truck to their pump stations and help them pull the pump. And there are all kind of little community services that you do that don't get done with investor-owned-utilities. And you have a sense of community pride, with everything that you do — you know the people; they're all your neighbors.

Giacomo: The big utilities out there are always hovering over, waiting for somebody to falter a little bit so they can absorb you. At a municipal you aren't working for the stockholders; you're working for the community. Basically, that's what AMP is doing. AMP is working for the communities. ... I think one of the successes of AMP has been their leadership. You had Dick Gorsuch, then you had Ken Hegeman, then you had Marc Gerken, now you got Jolene Thompson. I mean, to me, there's always that somebody at the top who was well-respected in the industry. And, you know, that means a lot. The smaller communities want representation from AMP. I think as long as AMP can do that, they'll be strong. If AMP wasn't as strong as they are, I think some of these little utilities would be in trouble.

Lyren: In my opinion, it's important to continue to protect public power, so that we can continue to provide our customers in the community with reasonably priced, not-for-profit electricity, which is reliable and safe. I should also add that public power provides us with local control, which affords us countless advantages and sets us aside from other utilities.

Krieger: I have a little different perspective, having...worked at Dayton Power & Light in various different positions, some of them really similar to what I do today. The focus at an investor-owned utility, the customer isn't at the top of the list. It's just the nature of their business. You know, the PUCO, the regulatory bodies are something that they spend a lot of time on ... and then shareholders are more important as well, and the customer comes in, you know, a strong third there. When I came to Piqua, it was really refreshing knowing that we're a not-for-profit. We're an at-cost utility. We're governed locally. We have a Piqua Energy Advisory Board that we meet with monthly that's made up of local business and residents. - When I want to recommend things, I'm able to bounce it off of them and make sure that we're like-minded about how we want to approach things and have that collective group. It makes things a lot easier then when I go to city commission for approval of things, and that's worked really well. When you can focus just on the customer, I think it's a lot easier proposition. And it's not that we don't have challenges, but again, it's a lot more rewarding. We don't deal with large bureaucracies; again, we report directly to our customers. It's just a really unique model that makes you feel really good about coming to work every day.

Post: It's good to have local control of your own utility. You're not having someone from states away setting your rates, setting your work rules, and those types of things. And you can help in other ways from your city; every public power community can help, at times, the street department or the water department, or parks do something little that they need a line truck for, for a couple hours or something like that. Public power (systems) are really the heart of the community. They provide so much good service to their customers that it's just something that's so easy to see, compared to fighting with an investor-owned utility to get a streetlight on or something like that. There are so many little things that add up. ... You get better service, and you have a say in the control.

Palmer: I think that public power is really that local control that's important, and it's important to preserve it because without it, you don't really have a say. The individual communities really are looking out for what's best for their area. They're expanding, they are improving reliability. ... Our member communities really are lucky to have public power.

AMP: **What does/did it mean to you, your electric crew, to the city, to have another AMP member community come in and help you in your time of greatest need? And what does it mean to you to be part of the Mutual Aid response where you go out and help others?**

Durkos: Well, it was quite a sight and quite a relief. I mean, like I said, before AMP, everybody was pretty much a stand-alone community. You know, you might have relations with one or two within close proximity but once AMP entered into the system, it kind of united these smaller communities. And, you know, with numbers you gain power, and you gain strength.

Giacomo: You know, it really makes me feel good ... because we had mutual aid before, but you took care of it yourself. You called the neighboring community; you did this, you did that. There were times I got called out of bed when I was working here in Wadsworth and that's part of the job, but it's just that, you know, you do what you can to help people. And I think what happens is, and I don't care what the town is, or how big it is, when you get called in to help somebody, to a neighboring community, you really want to help them. ... I think everybody takes pride in what they do. I used to

always tell my guys, “If you ever go anywhere on mutual aid, I want you to be the best crew there.” What happens is, because of the lineman schools and mutual aid and some of these other training programs, they get to know each other, and they actually become friends. It’s just a cohesiveness of working together.

Lyren: When I was coming up through the ranks as a lineman, I worked for the Village of Wellington, and we responded to a number of calls, and I was grateful that the system was in place so that I could go and take part in restoring electric service to customers that were outside of my hometown. As I moved up through my career, I became more in the line of supervision and management, and that new experience was being in a position to provide assistance to members in need. There have been so many. And my problem is that I can’t really put my finger on one that just totally touched me in that they all touched me; I get a great sense of self-gratification, being able to help those that are in real need. To understand what it’s like to provide the service back to customers when they need their power back on is something that you don’t really understand unless you’re able to do it.

Krieger: In Piqua in 2000, we had a straight-line windstorm. It resulted in customers being out of service for about three days. We activated and were able to get assistance from local municipals in our area — Minster, Tipp City, Versailles and Wapakoneta all responded and helped us. In 2012 when the derecho windstorm came through late on a Friday afternoon, I was talking with Gene Post during that event ... I didn’t even ask Gene to send the crews; he knew just by talking to me and the tone of my voice that we needed help. And so we had Hudson and Tipp City crews come to our need. ... And so, whenever we’re able, and even if we’re busy and we have things going on, we make it a priority (to help others). We went to Homestead, Florida. They were hit pretty significantly by (a hurricane). ... But they had so many responding crews, because of the extent of the damage, and they’d released all the other crews, except the AMP member crews. And their reason for that was because of the amount of work and the attitude of our employees while they were down there. So that’s quite a testimony.

AMP: **How would you explain the importance of mutual aid to a community or council that is on the fence about joining the program?**

Krieger: I’m always trying to spur other members to participate in this program and help out when members need aid because at some point, you’re going to need help and there’s not a more efficient and cost-effective way. And you have the brethren from the AMP membership and the skill level of employees that work in these communities. You’re getting help from your surrounding communities, in a quick and efficient and very cost-effective manner.

Post: I think (mutual aid) is just one of those things that it helps you get through some storms ... and the quicker you get it put back up, the better off everybody’s going to be. I think people should join; I think it’s a no brainer. Get your agreement signed, in network, out of network, and be prepared; get your disaster plan done and you have a peace of mind. ... I think foresight is a big part of mutual aid. Because when the storm comes, it’s too late.

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