

## A Hurricane Success Story: TECO – Peoples Gas

By KATHLEEN LYONS

MIAMI- As Hurricane Wilma's monster winds bore down on south Florida in the summer of 2005, TECO-Peoples Gas' year-old TechRoute dispatching system proved its mettle.

The computer-driven program rapidly weeded out minor jobs so the Peoples Gas technicians in the Miami area could concentrate on residences and businesses that urgently wanted their natural gas turned off before the arrival of punishing winds, torrential rain and flooding.

Once the storm had passed and power was restored, TechRoute helped the same technicians quickly return to those locations and turn the gas back on. TechRoute streamlined the process by providing each technician with precise driving instructions and time estimates for each job.

Peoples Gas' efficiency not only satisfied its up to 500 daily customers - it also won kudos from industry peers.

In October 2005, the American Gas Association gave Peoples Gas its "best practices" honor for effective dispatching and operations using TechRoute. The AGA is a trade group that represents 195 companies that deliver natural gas in the United States.

Alex Brito, former regional customer services manager for the southern region of TECO-Peoples Gas, said key to the success was the switch from in-house dispatchers to the computerized system developed by Denver, Colorado based 3-Point Technologies.

"We raised production by up to 10 percent," Brito, who is now an accounts manager for TECO Partners, said recently. "We saved time in routing - half an hour to an hour - because we didn't have to route it" ourselves.

Brito said 3-Point provided constant feedback and trouble-shooting to overcome technician resistance.

"We even formed a committee and any time a technician had a question we would send it to 3-Point and they'd track it down. ... 3-Point was always there. They always helped us whenever we had an issue."



A crew of Dominion Virginia Power linemen from Virginia Beach, VA, operate a half-dozen bucket trucks on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd in Boynton. (Staff Photo/Mark Randall)

The efficiency of TechRoute works hand-in-hand with a separate system Peoples Gas began using in 2002, also by 3-Point, which analyzes every aspect of each job as it is handled by a technician. That system - TechInsight - provides detailed efficiency, quality and safety reports on the technician that handles the job, the cost of completing that job, and whether customers called back to complain or ask for additional repairs.

Brito said TechInsight helped pave the way for TechRoute. He said the two are "different animals" but that together the combination results in higher efficiencies: "The combination is unmatched. Instead of us feeding job durations into TechRoute, TechInsight provides accurate job durations and technician efficiencies. This combination is why we were awarded the AGA Best Practices award."