STATEMENT FROM MAYOR HAILA

Ames was among the many cities impacted by a powerful storm known as a derecho that moved from eastern Nebraska across Iowa and parts of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana on Monday, August 10, 2020. The unprecedented amount of Ames power line destruction caused by high winds and downed trees, resulted in citywide power outages and loss of internet and cell service communications. The widespread geographic swath of this disaster, and the challenges in recovery operations created by this multi-state incident, cannot be overstated.

In Ames, the initial impact of the storm overloaded the Power Plant causing it to trip off-line. To make matters worse, all three transmission lines that provide the ability to import electricity from surrounding utilities were damaged to varying degrees. In response, our initial efforts were focused on repairing the least damaged transmission line, that being the Boone Tie Line. When this was complete, we were able to restore power to approximately 80% of the community.

Once that was accomplished, we knew that the next phase was going to be a much larger challenge. Hundreds of power poles and miles of distribution and feeder lines serving neighborhoods throughout our city were destroyed. Replacing lines and power poles is a slow, tedious, block-by-block process working in narrow passageways and alleys. To assist our city electric department crews in this undertaking, as soon as the storm was over and initial damage assessments made, we immediately called other electric entities for help. At a time when many other cities were seeking this same type of assistance, we were able to add eight more crews, in addition to our own, to work on restoration and repair work.

The strategy for restoring electricity to our entire community has been consistent from the start. The first phase of recovery directed personnel and equipment to address damage that, when fixed, would restore power to the greatest number of customers. As a result, as of today, approximately 96% of our customers now have electricity.
We are acutely aware that as many of 1,200 Ames customers remain without electricity five days after the storm. If your home is still one without power, we understand your frustration. We want you to know crews are continuing to work overtime every day, including this weekend, and will continue to do so until power is restored to every property!

Recognizing that those who were, and continue to be, without power had some immediate needs, we added services as the disaster aftermath unfolded. These include opening Cooling Centers, remote Information Centers set up in neighborhoods, Charging Stations added in several locations, and free bags of ice offered to the public. The city is also providing free pick up and/or drop-off of storm caused tree debris to assist our residents in the clean-up process.

For some of you, this past week has tested your confidence in the City of Ames. We know how important electricity is to the health and safety of your family. We will continue to work every day to restore your electricity as soon as possible!

By way of encouragement we are hearing numerous stories of acts of kindness and generosity demonstrated by members of our community towards each other and the electric service work crews. Thank you for thinking of others during this challenging time. Please continue doing so Ames. By working together, we will get through this difficult situation!

John A. Haila, Mayor
City of Ames