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Storm provided lessons

State officials say much was learned from experience

By **MICHELLE STARR**
Staff writer

A little over two years ago, a surprise October storm blanketed the city and NU campus with thick, wet snow.

Branches began to buckle and crack under the weight of the snow collecting on the leafy trees, bringing phone and power lines down with them.

The city and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln learned tragic but valuable lessons for future emergencies, said Kim Robak, NU vice president for external affairs, corporation secretary and former lieutenant governor who was acting as governor at the time of the storm.

"Both the city and the state are prepared for a future emergency like we had," Robak said.

An increase in efficiency and readiness was a major lesson the city learned because of the storm.

Lincoln Electric System has created a super crew that has improved efficiency and customer relations, said LES spokesman Russ Reno.

During the storm, the duty of cutting tree limbs away from power lines, repairing the lines and reconnecting them was separated into three different crews sent at different times in an attempt to serve the greatest number of people at one time.

Because of the storm, LES now makes emergency repairs with one crew, Reno said, because it was frustrating for customers to see one crew

"We'd be better able to handle a situation if it happens again because we've been through it."

KIRBY BAIRD
City Campus Landscaping manager

come and go and not have power back.

LES restored all power within eight days of the storm, Reno said.

The face of UNL's campus was also altered by the storm.

A little more than 50 percent of the number of trees lost have been replaced, said former City Campus Landscaping manager, Kirby Baird.

"It might take two or more years to get back to where we were in numbers," Baird said.

Considering new campus construction, safety and lighting problems, not all trees will be replaced in their previous positions, Baird said.

A landscape architect is evaluating the situation of the remaining trees.

"It is being dealt with on a case-by-case situation," Baird said.

Aliant Communications, now Alltel, made no changes to its emergency response procedures, said Bob Hoppe, Alltel spokesman.

Aliant had about 250 technicians repairing phone lines for the 16,000 customers that had their service interrupted. Hoppe was confident in the service provided.

"A lot of the employees spent a lot of time outside of their homes and couldn't take care of their own problems. They gave it their all," Hoppe said. "We were up and operating within a fairly reasonable amount of

time, within a week or so." Support from Lincoln citizens was outstanding, Reno said.

"The line technicians would come back from repairing lines and find warm food and drinks in their trucks," Reno said.

LES spent about \$4.3 million and used a total of about 764 LES employees, local and regional contractors, and surrounding power company employees to restore power to about 55,000 customers during the storm. A little over \$1 million was granted by the Federal Emergency Management Administration for assistance.

Aliant spent about \$1 million on repairs and did not receive any financial assistance. Hoppe said the expenses have not affected customers' rates.

UNL's City Campus Landscaping purchased a new tree shredder to help alleviate the volume of tree mass collected during the storm, Baird said.

Landscaping has spent a little over 11,000 hours on clean up to date. It is still evaluating some surviving trees to guarantee they are healthy and safe.

Baird, Hoppe, Robak and Reno all agree that the city is better prepared for a disaster of this magnitude, should one strike again.

"We'd be better able to handle a situation if it happens again because we've been through it," Baird said.

Writer wins award for second time

LONDON (AP) - South African writer J.M. Coetzee won the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction on Monday for his novel "Disgrace" - becoming the first author to win the award twice.

Coetzee, who is a professor of general literature at the University of Cape Town, won the \$32,000 prize at the 1999 awards ceremony in London's Guildhall. He also received a check worth the equivalent of \$1,600 for making the six-person shortlist.

"Disgrace" tells the story of a 52-

year-old professor in Cape Town, South Africa, who seeks refuge at his daughter's farm after an impulsive affair with a student.

Coetzee, who previously won the award in 1983 for his novel "Life and Times of Michael K" was in South Africa, but his editor Geoff Mulligan accepted the prize on his behalf and read a letter from the writer.

"If I do win it's only because the stars this October 25th are in a lucky conjunction for me," Coetzee's letter said. "It remains the ultimate prize to win in the English-speaking world."

CLARIFICATION

In a story in Tuesday's Daily Nebraskan, Glen Freeman was misidentified. He was representing the Nebraska Republican Party at

Monday night's Model United Nations debate. He works for Sen. Chuck Hagel but was not representing Hagel at the debate.

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Early-admissions application postmark deadline is Nov. 15, 1999. By Dec. 15, 1999, up to five early-admissions winners will be notified. All other entries must be postmarked by March 1, 2000.

To request an application packet, visit our Web site, e-mail us or write:

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