

ICE AVAILABLE FOR THOSE STILL WITHOUT POWER

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The sun may have been shining through the greater Saint John area on Friday, but many homes were still in the dark.

According to the NB Power website on Friday afternoon, more than 3,000 residents in St. Stephen, Rothesay and Sussex were still without power after post-tropical storm Arthur hit last weekend.

However, Meghan Gerrish, communications officer for NB Power, said the staff at the hydro company plan to have the majority of people back on the grid by Sunday evening.

“Right now we’re expecting to have 90 per cent of all of these customers back online tonight (Friday), 99 per cent by Sunday night and the remaining one per cent by Tuesday,” Gerrish said.

She said the remaining one per cent of customers are all being contacted directly by NB Power, and a lot of those areas are seasonal properties across the province.

Along with the loss of power can come the loss of food without refrigeration, and some people who have been without electricity for more than six days have had to throw out many spoiled groceries.

But on Thursday evening, a New Brunswick company started handing out ice to help preserve people’s food.

“We had been in discussions with EMO and Red Cross and they expressed that there had been a need for ice” said Chuck Brown, communications manager at Cooke Aquaculture. “So we started talking about logistics and figuring out the best way to do it and get ice out to the areas that need it.”

Ice is available at St. Stephen High School, the Grant-Harvey Centre in Fredericton and True North Salmon in St. George as well as the qplex in Quispamsis, the Brundage Point River Centre in Grand Bay-Westfield, Day & Ross Terminal in Waterville and in Meductic on Route 165.

Brown said the ice will be monitored over the weekend and replenished as needed for those without power.

And although supplying free ice may seem like a simple task, one mother from Grand-Bay Westfield said it’s a major help.

“The power outage is costing us a lot of money,” said Kendra Johnston.

Johnston has a five-year-old son and is nearly 34 weeks pregnant with her second child. She said her family lost power early last Saturday morning and on Friday afternoon they were still in the dark at home.

“We lost four bags of food. It’s extremely hard considering I have a five-year-old” Johnston said.

“Thank God for my parents because they have been taking time out of their day to come up and help me bring my laundry to their place and clean dishes, and bring water up for us to flush the toilet. It’s extremely draining.”

Before she discovered that ice was being provided to the community, Johnston said she was spending a lot of money on ice and trying to fill coolers to keep food from spoiling.

This is the longest period of time Johnston has gone without power.

The utility announced Thursday evening that it had made a “full assessment” of the amount of damage caused by post-tropical storm Arthur, which it said is the largest in the organization’s history.

Municipalities are continuing to offer services like showers, water and charging stations for cellphones, tablets and laptops. Fundy High School in St. George recently opened its locker rooms for residents to take showers. In Grand Bay-Westfield, the Brundage Point River Centre and the Community Centrum are open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. to charge devices and get non-drinking water for toilet flushing and washing. The River Valley arena is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to take showers.

The qplex in Quispamsis will be open on Saturday and Sunday for people to charge their electronic devices and get water from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.