



Media contact:
Erin La Row,
Sr. communications representative
Phone: 785.575.6060
Erin.la.row@westarenergy.com

**RELIABILITREE AREA EXPERIENCES ABOUT HALF THE OUTAGES
SEEN IN REST OF METRO DURING RECENT STORM**

WICHITA, Kan., Aug. 12, 2011 — Mother Nature has provided some worthy tests of ReliabiliTree. Comparing tree-related outages in the northeast area of Wichita, where ReliabiliTree work is complete, with the rest of the metro shows that in last week's violent wind storm tree-related outages were nearly cut in half in that area. A severe storm pummeled south-central Kansas on August 3 punching a strong blow to Westar Energy's distribution system in the Wichita metro area. The storm dropped heavy rain and dangerous lightning. Winds reaching up to 80 miles per hour downed power lines and utility poles. More than 33,000 customers were without power over the course of the storm in the Wichita metro area. However, the northeast quadrant of the Wichita metro area, which has been cleared by ReliabiliTree, Westar's line clearance pilot program, had 46 percent fewer outages compared with the rest of the metro area. About 5,000 customers in the northeastern section of metro Wichita lost power. The other three quadrants had an average of 9,200 customers interrupted per quadrant.

“Our customers deserve safe, reliable electric service. We cannot prevent all power outages, but with ReliabiliTree we're taking proactive steps so that our customers are less likely to have their lives interrupted by a power outage,” said Caroline Williams, vice president, distribution power delivery. “These results tell us we're taking the right steps.”

Restoration related to this storm was challenging because most of the damage was to transformers and service lines. Service lines connect individual homes and businesses to the distribution system. Restoring these lines takes longer and only restores power to a small number of customers at a time. All customers were restored on or by Friday, Aug. 5.

ReliabiliTree began in 2010 as a pilot program in the Wichita metro area. The intent is to clear or prune trees first through the entire project area and then maintain the vegetation by returning about every four to five years. The program divides the Wichita metro area into quadrants. ReliabiliTree has completed work in the northeast quadrant and recently began work in the northwest quadrant. The program also supports Westar's core value of safety for its employees, contractors and the public.

In its first year, ReliabiliTree has reduced tree-related power outages in the northeast quadrant by nearly 70 percent, compared to the previous two years. Those areas have also had a nearly 8 percent overall reduction in power outages, which includes outages caused by lightning, wildlife and equipment failure.

Customers can see when ReliabiliTree will be working in their neighborhood by going to WestarEnergy.com/tree, clicking on the line clearance schedule and entering their address.

- 30 -

Westar Energy, Inc. (NYSE: WR) is the largest electric utility in Kansas, providing electric service to about 687,000 customers in the state. Westar Energy has about 6,800 megawatts of electric generation capacity and operates and coordinates more than 34,000 miles of electric distribution and transmission lines.

For more information about Westar Energy, visit us on the Internet at <http://www.WestarEnergy.com>.