



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC COMPANY HONORED FOR TORNADO RESTORATION

JOPLIN, MO – March 21, 2012 – The Empire District Electric Company was today honored with the Edison Electric Institute's "Emergency Recovery Award" for the restoration completed following the May 22, 2011 tornado.

The "Emergency Recovery Award" is presented annually to showcase efforts made by electric utilities to restore service that has been breached by severe weather conditions or other natural events.

Nominations for this award are taken internationally, and winners are selected by a panel of former executives of investor-owned utilities throughout the United States.

Empire received recognition for the rapid response and restoration efforts made following the tornado that tore through the Joplin and Duquesne communities leaving approximately 20,000 customers without service. Empire lost about 4,000 poles and 100 miles of line. Within 10 days, power was restored to customers who were able to receive service. At that point, approximately 8,000 customers were unable to have service reconnected. By August, the number was reduced to 3,900 and, at the end of 2011, the system-wide customer count was down by only 1,800.

In describing the experience, Martin Penning, vice president of commercial operations at Empire, stated, "In our 102-year history, this was the most devastating storm to impact our company. The work of our employees and those of the companies who came to our aid immediately following the storm was exemplary. We are proud of the work that has been done and are focused on the reconstruction that continues. The outpouring of help from countless groups and individuals all across the country has been extraordinary, and we are honored to be a part of it."

The Edison Electric Institute (EEI) is the association of U.S. shareholder-owned electric companies. Its

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members serve 95 percent of the ultimate customers in the shareholder-owned segment of the industry, and represent approximately 70 percent of the U.S. electric power industry. The organization also has more than 65 international electric companies as Affiliate members, and more than 170 industry suppliers and related organizations as Associate members.

Based in Joplin, Missouri, The Empire District Electric Company (NYSE: EDE) is an investor-owned, regulated utility providing electric, natural gas (through its wholly owned subsidiary The Empire District Gas Company) and water service, with approximately 215,000 customers in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. A subsidiary of the Company also provides fiber optic services.

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