Power Restored in Southern Louisiana

December 27, 2010 – Today at 9:16 a.m. Southwest Power Pool, Inc. (SPP) instructed transmission operators in south central Louisiana to restore loading on the transmission system; all load was restored at 9:24 a.m. Today at 6:26 a.m. SPP instructed operators to reduce loading on the high voltage transmission system by 277 megawatts by interrupting customers’ electric service. SPP’s instructions were necessary due to extremely high loading on electric transmission facilities, caused by an unplanned transmission outage, unavailability of some local generation, and higher than expected demand due to the cold weather.

SPP’s instructions to operators resulted in short-term electricity curtailments for some customers of five utilities – Lafayette Utilities System, CLECO, Entergy, Louisiana Energy and Power Authority, and Louisiana Generating LLC. Each utility was responsible for reducing a certain amount of demand; the utilities determined how to achieve that reduction, including decisions regarding critical customers.

According to SPP Vice President of Operations Lanny Nickell, “The good news is that, working together with the utilities, we were able to keep the lights on for most customers most of the time, as our plans are designed to ensure. This was a necessary step to mitigate greater power outages and prevent long-lasting damage to the transmission system. Interrupting power to customers for short periods of time is always a last resort in actions taken to maintain regional electric reliability, and we appreciate customers’ understanding.”

SPP operates the bulk power grid under rules and regulations of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and always has contingency plans in place to address emergencies that might occur on the electric grid.

SPP has worked with Cleco, Entergy, and Lafayette Utilities System to create a transmission expansion plan for an area the utilities call the “Acadiana Load Pocket,” which is south of Highway 190 between the Atchafalaya Basin and Jennings, Louisiana. The construction of new substations, transmission lines, and capacitor banks at an estimated cost of approximately $200 million is expected to be completed in 2012. Each utility is responsible for various components of the project work.

###

Southwest Power Pool, Inc. is a group of 61 members in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas that serve more than five million customers. Membership is comprised of investor-owned utilities, municipal systems, generation and transmission cooperatives, state authorities, wholesale generators, power marketers, and independent transmission companies. SPP was a founding member of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation in 1968, and was designated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as a Regional Transmission Organization (RTO) in 2004 and a Regional Entity (RE) in 2007. As an RTO, SPP ensures reliable supplies of power, adequate transmission infrastructure, and competitive wholesale prices of electricity. The SPP RE oversees compliance enforcement and reliability standards development.