

## Message from JCP&L 2-13-23

### **FirstEnergy Reminds Customers to Keep Loved Ones Warm and Cozy this Valentine's Day by Properly Handling Foil Balloons**

*Public education efforts driving steady decrease in balloon-related outages over recent years*

AKRON, Ohio – With Valentine's Day around the corner, FirstEnergy Corp. is once again reminding customers about the public safety risks associated with helium-filled foil balloons. While these balloons have increased in popularity as decorations, they continue to cause power outages each year when released outdoors because their metallic coating conducts electricity and poses a risk to the electric system.

"Our communities have done a great job helping us raise awareness of the dangers of power outages caused by metallic balloons, and FirstEnergy has experienced year-over-year decreases in the number of these outages as a result," said Lisa Rouse, director of distribution system operations at FirstEnergy. "However, we must continue to educate people of all ages on how to use these balloons responsibly to keep electricity flowing safely and reliably year-round."

Last year, foil balloons were to blame for 102 power outages across FirstEnergy's six-state service area—an 18% decrease in balloon-related outages when compared to 2021 and a 25% decrease when compared to 2020.

Due to the popularity of Valentine's Day balloons, February typically marks the onset of a dramatic increase in outages caused by adrift metallic balloons that peaks in June, when warm weather takes celebrations and picnics outdoors.

To help ensure holidays and celebrations are enjoyed responsibly, customers are encouraged to keep the following balloon safety tips in mind:

- Use caution and avoid celebrating with metallic balloons near overhead electric lines.
- Securely tie helium-filled metallic balloons to a weight that is heavy enough to prevent them from floating away. Do not remove the weight until the balloons are deflated.
- Puncture and deflate metallic balloons once they are no longer in use because they can stay inflated for several weeks. Never release them into the sky.
- Never attempt to retrieve any type of balloon, kite or toy that becomes caught in a power line. Leave it alone and immediately call FirstEnergy at 888-544-4877 to report the problem.
- Stay far away from a downed or low-hanging power line. Always assume downed lines are energized and dangerous. Report them ASAP by calling 911.

"With a little care and precaution when handling foil balloons, we can all do our part to help keep the energy alive this Valentine's Day and all year long," said Rouse.

Visit [www.firstenergycorp.com/publicsafety](http://www.firstenergycorp.com/publicsafety) to learn about FirstEnergy's "Stop. Look. Live." safety campaign to educate the public about staying safe around electricity and near power lines and equipment.