2026 SGA Awards Finalists: Emergency Management

Entry: After the Storm: Assisting the St. Louis community after the May 2025 tornado

Company: Spire

What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?
On Friday, May 16, at approximately 2:39 p.m., a nearly mile-wide EF-3 tornado touched down just west of the City of St. Louis, tracking eastwardly across the Greater St. Louis area. Spire employees sprang into action to provide response, relief and recovery to our customers -- and to the community overall. Like all events, this emergency was unexpected, but it impacted the City of St. Louis on an enormous scale.

What approach or solution did your team implement?
After the catastrophic St Louis tornado and storms on May 16, 2025, numerous operations team members courageously provided support in the City's **Emergency Operations Center** through the initial response phase. (May 16-30). Working together, and under the leadership of Spire's eastern Missouri field leadership, **fifty-five Spire operations professionals** cleared 16 streets and dedicated more than 2,000 hours to the recovery efforts, ensuring street and sidewalks were accessible and safe for residents. With the support of a **cross-functional group and an ICS structure,** Spire employees came together to help citizens of St. Louis restore physical safety and begin to recover, The task was not without challenges -- and took coordination across utilities, municipal entities and community partners.

Numerous Spire employees were involved in the direct emergency response, relief and recovery efforts -- far too numerous to mention here. The coordination of their efforts was truly impressive to observe.

BY THE NUMBERS:
To provide context, **over the two initial days following the incident, Spire experienced more than1,300 emergency calls to Customer Experience and Dispatch** (May 16-18) and received **620 emergency orders** for the field (May 16-18). These statistics are even more noteworthy given that **many of the impacted areas were without cell service for a number of days after the incident**. Additionally, from May 16-30, Spire employees dedicated more than 495 hours of additional workforce support from the customer experience and dispatch teams alone.

We also had colleagues from three of our third-party contractors join us, and together, we cleared 22 miles of road. (May 16 – 30).

A cross-functional team from Spire led by Todd Gibson, director of ops, coordinated with other members of the Regional Business Council, City of St. Louis leadership, other utilities, first responders and community partners to support the City's response efforts known as STL Recovers. Spire's participation continued through May 30.

On the day of the event, Spire began **customer communications** with messaging deployed in two phases: Phase 1 – natural gas safety messaging (May 16-17) to all eastern MO customers and Phase 2 – tornado relief and assistance (May 19-20) to 56,000 customers in impacted zip codes. Webpage: St. Louis Tornado Recovery 2025 | Spire. In the true Spire spirit of caring for the communities we serve, under the leadership of President and CEO Scott Doyle, Spire was one of the first utilities to respond with actionable relief for impacted customers.

The **customer tornado relief** consisted of suspension of disconnections for non-payment, the waiving of service initiation and reconnection fees, and special, extended payment arrangement plans available for those impacted.

Spire also provided initial **charitable gifts** to the American Red Cross – St. Louis Chapter and United Way of Greater St. Louis. Spire employees participated in Donation drives throughout Missouri East, benefiting the St. Louis Early Childhood Tornado Response Team Volunteerism.

Working through the Urban League of Greater St. Louis, members of Spire's Community Services team have provided support to customers in need and built awareness of Spire's tornado relief and assistance programs. (May 16 – ongoing to this day.)

As part of the STL Recovers efforts, Spire provided personnel resources and donations of equipment and supplies, with a cash value equivalent of more than $260,000. View the RBC's overview video

What was the result or measurable outcome?
In addition to the results and examples of Spire's effective efforts previously listed that range from a true yeoman's efforts in operations emergency management to customer relief initiatives to philanthropic and community engagement, **Spire continues to be engaged in tornado relief efforts.** True recovery from a catastrophic event does not occur within a day, a month, or even a year. For Spire, our efforts have always focused on response, relief and recovery. As just one example, Spire President and CEO Scott Doyle and other Spire employees distributed Thanksgiving meal kits and offered energy assistance for those impacted. This spring, we will participate and host additional events to support recovery efforts. In summary, Spire's continued active engagement in community volunteer events is proof positive that we support STL's recovery for the long haul.

How does this work reflect SGA's mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?
Spire's employees - particularly those operational boots on the ground doing emergency management work to ensure the STL community was safe -- truly reflect SGA's mission to advance and maintain the safety of the STL community and its people. From participation in our own ICS structure, to participation in the City's, to responding to a request to join and lead members of the business community in recovery efforts, Spire operational employees and all engaged support services exemplified dedication, grit and collaboration.

As a company, we took the opportunity to do a post-incident review to learn from the event and further strengthen an already strong ICS structure and response. This truly underscores SGA's mission to share, grow and advance.

Contributors: Todd Gibson, Steve Mills, Dallass Jones, Corey Koca, Daniel Potter, Dave Williams, Arthur Cheatham, Vernita Rodgers, Sally Vandergrift, Christopher Gagliano, Scott Doyle

Entry: Code Blue: Protecting People and Preserving System Integrity When It Mattered Most

Company: Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline

What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?
When winter weather arrives, communities across Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming depend on Southern Star to keep families warm and secure. Meeting that responsibility during extreme winter events requires more than operational excellence — it requires the entire organization moving with a shared sense of urgency and purpose.

Before Code Blue, extreme weather response was primarily viewed as an Operations responsibility. While critical work was happening in the field and control room, situational awareness and ownership often stopped there. Other parts of the organization continued normal routines, largely disconnected from the real-time operational and system pressures unfolding during peak demand events.

Code Blue changed that.

Code Blue is transformational not because of the structural changes it introduced, but because of the behavioral shift it created. Under Code Blue, extreme weather is no longer “an Ops issue” — it becomes an enterprise-wide moment where the entire organization pauses with a shared mindset: How can I help keep people safe and keep gas flowing?

That cultural transformation was fully realized during Winter Storm Fern in January 2026, one of the most demanding winter operations periods Southern Star has experienced. Prolonged extreme cold, snow, and ice drove record-setting demand and sustained operational stress across the system. The challenge was not only maintaining safe and reliable operations, but doing so while protecting team members in hazardous conditions — knowing that failure in any single area could cascade across the system.

What made the difference was shared awareness and ownership at every level of the organization. Leaders and support teams understood, in real time, the significance of system conditions once reserved for the control room alone. Meetings paused. Priorities shifted. Teams proactively asked where help was needed. Decisions across departments reflected the same understanding of system demand, operational risk, and human safety.

That shift — from isolated response to collective accountability — is the true story of Code Blue. During Winter Storm Fern, Southern Star didn’t simply respond to extreme weather. **The organization responded as one.**

What approach or solution did your team implement?

Southern Star activated Code Blue, a formalized emergency management framework designed specifically for extreme winter events and peak-day operational risk. More than an operational protocol, Code Blue intentionally creates a shared, enterprise-wide moment of awareness and accountability during conditions where safety, system reliability, and customer service are most at risk.

Developed in 2025 and initiated by executive leadership when defined thresholds are met — including severe weather forecasts or systemwide flow expectations — Code Blue ensures the organization moves with a unified understanding of real-time system conditions and priorities.

Upon activation, Code Blue signals a clear behavioral shift by:

- Pausing nonessential activities so the organization can focus exclusively on safe operations and system reliability
- Reinforcing people-first safety behaviors, including fatigue management and enhanced field safety protocols
- Creating shared situational awareness through structured, recurring coordination calls led by Gas Control
- Aligning cross-functional teams around real-time system conditions, risk mitigation, and support needs

This disciplined framework transforms extreme weather response from a function-specific activity into a collective responsibility, ensuring focused execution, clear communication, and enterprise-wide alignment during the most critical operating conditions.

What was the result or measurable outcome?
Winter Storm Fern marked the first real-world operational deployment of Southern Star's finalized **Code Blue Winter Weather Preparedness Playbook** and served as a definitive test of the behavioral and operational changes it was designed to create. Through structured communications, shared situational awareness, and coordinated decision-making — supported by Microsoft Teams and recurring, Gas Control-led calls — the organization responded as a unified enterprise rather than a collection of functional silos.

Code Blue enabled leaders and support teams across the company to recognize the significance of real-time system conditions, adjust priorities, pause nonessential work, and proactively support safe operations. This shared awareness translated directly into disciplined execution during one of the most challenging winter operating periods in Southern Star's history.

During **Winter Storm Fern (January 2026)**, Southern Star successfully navigated prolonged extreme cold, snow, ice, localized freeze-offs, mechanical challenges, and upstream supply constraints **without any reported safety incidents, minor events, or abnormal operating conditions**. All customer nominations were met, and uninterrupted service was maintained throughout the event.

Peak system demand reached one of the highest levels in Southern Star's operating history — ranking among the **top ten all-time demand events** — while overall system stability and line pack margins were preserved for the duration of the Code Blue activation. These results demonstrate both the effectiveness of the Code Blue framework and the cultural shift it created, reinforcing a shared responsibility for safety, reliability, and customer service during extreme conditions.

How does this work reflect SGA's mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?

Code Blue reflects SGA's mission by demonstrating how intentional leadership, cultural alignment, and disciplined execution can strengthen safety, reliability, and system resilience across the natural gas industry during extreme operating conditions.

Share.

Importantly, Code Blue is designed as a repeatable and shareable emergency management model. The framework incorporates structured after-action reviews, captures lessons learned, and continuously refines preparedness expectations. By documenting and sharing these practices internally and through forums such as SGA, Southern Star contributes practical, field-tested guidance that other operators can adapt to improve winter preparedness, response discipline, and organizational awareness. These shared insights help advance industry-wide safety performance and ensure more reliable energy delivery during periods when communities depend on natural gas most.

Grow.

The framework supports organizational growth by reinforcing behaviors that elevate risk awareness, accountability, and workforce protection across all functions — not just Operations. Code Blue's people-first posture ensured fatigue management, field safety, and priority alignment remained central as system demand reached historic levels. This cultural shift strengthens leadership readiness, improves decision quality under pressure, and builds a more resilient workforce prepared to manage future extreme weather events.

Advance.

Code Blue advances operational excellence by reframing extreme winter response from a function-specific activity into an enterprise-wide responsibility. During Winter Storm Fern, executive-led activation criteria, structured operational touchpoints, and real-time system visibility enabled Southern Star to operate safely and reliably during one of the most severe demand events in company history. By maintaining zero safety incidents, zero minor events, and zero abnormal operating conditions while meeting all customer nominations, Code Blue illustrates how proactive decision-making and shared situational awareness can protect both people and infrastructure under peak-day stress.

Contributors: Gas Control, Commercial Services and Operations

Entry: Natural Gas Distribution Response to UPS Flight 2976 Crash

Company: LG&E / KU

What challenge was this project or initiative created to solve?
The initiative addressed an unprecedented emergency involving catastrophic aircraft crash, loss of life, and widespread damage to natural gas infrastructure within a hazardous environment adjacent to airport property. Challenges included ensuring public and responder safety, preserving natural gas system integrity, operating under federal investigation and national media scrutiny, managing environmental contamination, and restoring service safely and reliably to affected customers.

What approach or solution did your team implement?
LG&E's Gas Operations team executed a safety-first emergency management response, including same-evening preventive system isolation at a regulator station adjacent to airport property, disciplined coordination through the Incident Command System, and staged system integrity evaluation once access was granted. Upon confirming widespread contamination, the team made a conservative decision to fully replace the affected distribution system, coordinated accelerated engineering and construction, redirected resources from other projects, and ensured full regulatory compliance, including PHMSA notification under 49 CFR Part 192.

What was the result or measurable outcome?
The response safely eliminated risk to the public and responders, supported multi-agency emergency and investigative efforts, and culminated in the accelerated replacement of nearly 14,000 feet of gas main and transfer of 71 service lines. Service was restored to all 94 impacted customers by December 19, 2025, following more than 17,000 combined employee and contractor work hours with zero safety incidents.

How does this work reflect SGA's mission to Share, Grow, and Advance the natural gas industry?
This response advances the industry by demonstrating best practices in emergency management, system integrity protection, regulatory compliance, and cross-agency coordination under extreme conditions. The project reflects a commitment to sharing lessons learned, growing industry resilience, and advancing public trust through transparent, disciplined, and safety-driven natural gas operations.